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**B R I E F I N G**

**D O C U M E N T**

## **The last critical step to the 2005 NPT Review Conference**

The United Kingdom's Record  
on Nuclear Disarmament since  
the 2000 NPT Conference

April 2004

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#### **Introduction**

**T**HE CAMPAIGN FOR NUCLEAR DISARMAMENT (CND) is the leading UK-based Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO) which campaigns non-violently to secure global elimination of nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction in order to create mutual security for all. To this end, CND empowers its members and supporters to actively engage in the political process for a nuclear-free world; stimulates wide public debate on the need for alternatives both to the nuclear cycle and to military options to resolve conflicts; co-operates with other groups in the UK and internationally to achieve a co-ordinated campaign; and lobbies the British government and parliament to influence their policy decisions in favour of the elimination of British nuclear weapons as a major contribution to global abolition.

Thus CND is joining other anti-nuclear and pro-peace organisations in New York from 26th April to 7th May to attend the last Preparatory Committee (PrepCom) meeting of the 2005 NPT Review Conference. We hope that it will be possible by the 2005 Review Conference to record some progress towards fulfilment of the commitments made in 2000 by the UK and other declared nuclear weapons states, but we do not currently believe that the progress made will be satisfactory.

This report makes some assessment of the United Kingdom's current record on nuclear disarmament since the 2000 NPT Conference, and also shares CND's concerns about a number of issues which are likely to have a detrimental effect on the UK's overall record by the 2005 NPT Review Conference. We recognise and commend the areas where the UK government has made concrete achievements, such as the signing and ratification of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty and work on verification. We also recognise that of the nuclear weapons states, the UK's report on progress towards implementation of the 13 steps, as promised under step 12, is the most comprehensive and transparent. We believe that the UK should therefore present a more formal report which can be presented to the other states for evaluation in a systematic way. This would provide a good example to the other nuclear weapons states. We are, however, concerned that what we perceive as a shifting emphasis in government policy will have a negative effect on the overall aims, and indeed fulfilment, of the NPT.

## Executive Summary

1. At the 2000 NPT Review Conference, the then UK Foreign Office Minister, Peter Hain MP, told the Conference: *“the United Kingdom is practising what we preach. We are unequivocally committed to the pursuit of nuclear disarmament. We are convinced that the NPT remains fundamental to achieving this goal”*.<sup>1</sup>
2. This positive statement was reinforced when, at the end of the Conference, the states parties to the NPT, including the UK and the four other declared nuclear weapons states, signed a Final Statement in which they *“gave an unequivocal undertaking to accomplish the total elimination of their nuclear arsenals”*.
3. These extremely welcome developments were not subsequently followed through however and over the last four years the UK government has pulled back from the spirit of the above commitments. On 5th June 2000, barely three weeks after the end of the Conference, the UK Secretary of State for Defence, Geoff Hoon MP, told the House of Commons: *“the non-proliferation treaty agreement is an aspiration; it is not likely to produce results in the short term.”*
4. Since then the meaning of the Defence Secretary’s statement has become increasingly clear. Successive ministerial statements and actions by the government have shown that the UK seems intent not only on keeping its nuclear arsenals, but also on increasing its nuclear capabilities. There also appears to have been a lowering of the nuclear use threshold through the moving away from negative security assurances.
5. Although there has been a reduction in the numbers of operational nuclear warheads, their destructive potential has been significantly enhanced in terms of range, targeting and accuracy.
6. The UK government has given permission for the US to use Fylingdales early warning radar for its Missile Defence system. The radar system requires upgrading for this purpose and this will be completed by autumn 2005. It is likely that the UK government will receive a request for the US Menwith Hill intelligence base to take on a key Missile Defence role. The UK government has also set up a Missile Defence centre to lobby the US on behalf of UK arms corporations and to guide UK policy on the issue.
7. Co-operation between the UK and US teams working on the design and testing of nuclear warheads has increased significantly in recent years, in contravention of the spirit of Article 1 of the NPT.
8. CND believes that if the UK government had the political will it could use its position in the world to rally international opinion in favour of the full implementation of the 2000 NPT agreements.

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<sup>1</sup> [www.gov.uk/2000 NPT Statement](http://www.gov.uk/2000_NPT_Statement)

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## The 13 promises of the 2000 NPT Review Conference

The 6th NPT Review Conference ended with a Final Statement in which the UK and the four other declared nuclear weapons states gave an “unequivocal undertaking to accomplish the total elimination of their nuclear arsenals”. Together with the other signatories, the UK agreed to take 13 steps leading to the complete elimination of its nuclear weapons. These are as follows:

1. The importance and urgency of signatures and ratifications, without delay and without conditions and in accordance with constitutional procedures, to achieve the early entry into force of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty.
2. A moratorium on nuclear weapon test explosions or any other nuclear explosions pending entry in to force of that Treaty.
3. The necessity of negotiations in the Conference on Disarmament on a non-discriminatory, multilateral and internationally and effectively verifiable treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices in accordance with the statement of the Special Coordinator in 1995 and the mandate contained therein, taking into consideration both nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation objectives. The Conference on Disarmament is urged to agree on a programme of work which includes the immediate commencement of negotiations on such a treaty with a view to their conclusion within five years.
4. The necessity of establishing in the Conference on Disarmament an appropriate subsidiary body with a mandate to deal with nuclear disarmament. The Conference on Disarmament is urged to agree on a programme of work which includes the immediate commencement of negotiations on such a treaty with a view to their conclusion within five years.
5. The principle of irreversibility to apply to nuclear disarmament, nuclear and other related arms control and reduction measures.
6. An unequivocal undertaking by the nuclear weapon States to accomplish the total elimination of their nuclear arsenals leading to nuclear disarmament to which all States parties are committed under Article VI.
7. The early entry into force and full implementation of START II and the conclusion of START III as soon as possible while preserving and strengthening the ABM Treaty as a cornerstone of strategic stability and as a basis for further reduction of strategic offensive weapons, in accordance with its provisions.
8. The completion and implementation of the Trilateral Initiative between the United States of America, the Russian Federation and the International Atomic Energy Agency.
9. Steps by all the nuclear weapon States leading to nuclear disarmament in a way that promotes international stability, and based on the principle of undiminished security for all:
  - Further efforts by the nuclear weapon States to reduce their nuclear arsenals unilaterally
  - Increased transparency by the nuclear weapon States with regard to their nuclear

- weapons capabilities and the implementation of agreements pursuant to Article VI and as a voluntary confidence-building measure to support further progress on nuclear disarmament
- The further reduction of non-strategic nuclear weapons, based on unilateral initiatives and as an integral part of the nuclear arms reduction and disarmament process
  - Concrete agreed measures to further reduce the operational status of nuclear weapons systems
  - A diminishing role for nuclear weapons in security policies to minimize the risk that these weapons will ever be used and to facilitate the process of their total elimination
  - The engagement as soon as appropriate of all the nuclear weapon States in the process leading to the total elimination of their nuclear weapons
10. Arrangements by all nuclear weapon States to place, as soon as practical, fissile material designated by each of them as no longer required for military purposes under IAEA or other relevant international verification and arrangements for the disposition of such material for peaceful purposes, to ensure that such material remains permanently outside of military programmes.
  11. Reaffirmation that the ultimate objective of the efforts of States in the disarmament process is general and complete disarmament under effective international control.
  12. Regular reports, within the framework of the NPT strengthened review process, by States parties on the implementation of Article VI and paragraph 4(c) of the 1995 Decision on 'Principles and Objectives for Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament'; and recalling the Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice of 8 July 1996.
  13. The further development of the verification capabilities that will be required to provide assurance of compliance with nuclear disarmament agreements for the achievement and maintenance of a nuclear-weapon-free world.

### **Causes for concern**

CND is seriously concerned that instead of taking the 13 steps towards complete elimination of its nuclear weapons as agreed at the 2000 NPT Review Conference, the UK has taken a number of steps that are not conducive to fulfilment of these goals:

1. On 5th March 2004, in a speech at his Sedgefield Constituency, the British Prime Minister Tony Blair MP referred to the advocacy of multilateralism as “cynicism” and “naiveté” and effectively called for a change in international law to allow pre-emptive wars “*where in certain clear circumstances, we do intervene, even though we are not directly threatened*”:

*“Let me attempt an explanation of how my own thinking, as a political leader, has evolved during these past few years. Already, before 11th September the world's view of the justification of military action had been changing. The only clear case in international relations for armed intervention had been self-defence, response to aggression... This is not a time to err on the side of caution; not a time to weigh the risks to an infinite balance; not a time for the cynicism of the worldly wise*

*[multilateralists} who favour playing it long. Their worldly wise cynicism is actually at best naiveté and at worst dereliction. When they talk, as they do now, of diplomacy coming back into fashion in respect of Iran or North Korea or Libya, do they seriously think that diplomacy alone has brought about this change?... The states that proliferate or acquire WMD illegally are doing so precisely to avoid containment. Emphatically I am not saying that every situation leads to military action. But we surely have a duty and a right to prevent the threat materialising. I called for a doctrine of international community, where in certain clear circumstances, we do intervene, even though we are not directly threatened”.*

[<http://www.number10.gov.uk/output/Page5470.asp>]

2. In March 2002, the Secretary of State for Defence, Geoff Hoon MP, stated that if British troops were threatened by chemical or biological weapons, the UK government reserved the right to use nuclear weapons. This constitutes a lowering of the threshold of nuclear use, because the UK’s 1998 Strategic Defence Review had clearly stated that nuclear weapons would not be used against a non-nuclear weapons state not in material breach of its nuclear non-proliferation obligations, unless it were to attack the UK – the so-called negative security assurances. This was also in spite of the fact that, under the 2000 NPT agreements, the UK had committed itself to ensuring “a diminishing role for nuclear weapons in their security policies as a means towards their total elimination”.
3. In March 2003, the UK joined the US in the pre-emptive war against Iraq ostensibly to disarm the country of its supposed weapons of mass destruction. By taking part in this war the UK has, in effect, seriously undermined the NPT. It has introduced a parallel and unilateral policy of nuclear disarmament through war, significantly undermining the multilateral disarmament regime.
4. On 20th November 2003, the Defence Secretary Geoff Hoon MP attempted to re-interpret the NPT so as to give the UK and other four declared nuclear weapons states the legal right to own nuclear weapons when, in reply to a parliamentary question, he told the House of Commons: *“Under the terms of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, the United Kingdom, the United States, France, China and Russia are legally entitled to possess nuclear weapons.”*

Nowhere in the Treaty is there any statement, which suggests that countries are legally entitled to possess nuclear weapons. On the contrary, Article VI categorically states:

*“Each of the Parties to the Treaty undertakes to pursue negotiations in good faith on effective measures relating to cessation of the nuclear arms race at an early date and to nuclear disarmament, and on a treaty on general and complete disarmament under strict and effective international control.”*

5. The UK is recruiting hundreds of scientists for the Atomic Weapons Establishment (AWE) at Aldermaston and is apparently pursuing plans to help upgrade nuclear weapons design and production facilities for a possible replacement for the Trident nuclear weapons system. There is also concern that these developments would make possible the production of a new generation of nuclear weapons.

6. The UK has failed to implement the recommendation of the July 2000 report of the Foreign Affairs Select Committee inquiry on Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD). The report urged “the Government to co-operate with the US Administration and encourage the new US President to re-submit the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) to the Senate for ratification as an urgent priority”, and recommended that “the Government should fully support the proposed 18 per cent increase in the CTBT Organisation’s budget for 2001 report, given the importance of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty Organisation in stemming nuclear proliferation”.
7. The UK has not, as yet, acted on another recommendation of the same Committee, which requested that “the Government make renewed efforts to help to break the impasse on the Fissile Material Cut-Off Treaty (FMCT) negotiations and ensure that substantive negotiations commence quickly”. Given the commitment made by the UK at the 2000 NPT Review Conference that it would “immediately commence negotiations on FMCT with a view to their conclusion in five years”, more rapid progress is desirable.
8. The UK, along with the other nuclear weapons states, has failed to reach agreement on the establishment in the UN Conference on Disarmament (CD) of appropriate subsidiary bodies with a mandate to deal with nuclear disarmament.
9. The UK has failed to make a firm commitment that it will not extend the life of its present Trident nuclear weapons system, and will not replace it when its current service life runs out. This is the one decisive step that would accomplish the total elimination of its nuclear arsenals to which it committed itself at the 2000 NPT Review Conference. The likely consideration of this issue in the next parliament is an opportunity for the UK government to make this commitment.
10. The UK has failed to significantly reduce the operational status of its nuclear weapons systems as agreed at the 2000 NPT Review Conference by, for example, de-alerting and removing its nuclear warheads from their delivery systems.
11. The UK has failed to abandon its ‘minimum nuclear deterrent policy’, a vital move that would ensure a diminishing role for nuclear weapons in its security policies, as agreed at the 2000 NPT Review Conference.
12. The UK has failed to declare that its stocks of fissile material are no longer required for military purposes under IAEA.
13. The UK has signed the June 2003 UK/US Memorandum of Understanding with the United States concerning the development of the US Missile Defence system.
14. The UK is set to renew the 1958 UK/US Mutual Defence Agreement, which includes co-operation in the design, development, deployment and targeting of nuclear weapons.
15. The UK has commenced an eight-year programme at Devonport Dockyard to refit the four Trident nuclear weapons submarines. This is incompatible with the NPT commitment to work towards nuclear disarmament.

16. The UK retains a sub-strategic role for Trident as well as a strategic role, and allows the US to station tactical nuclear weapons on UK soil, at RAF Lakenheath.

### **The UK and vertical nuclear weapons proliferation**

UK policy with regard to weapons of mass destruction may be described as contradictory. While the UK has failed to make significant progress on its commitments under the 2000 NPT agreements, and has joined the USA in an illegal pre-emptive war to disarm Iraq of its alleged weapons of mass destruction, the UK nevertheless appears to be actively perfecting the capability of its own weapons of mass destruction.

British capability is now concentrated on the Trident submarine nuclear weapons system, deployed via four submarines – *Vanguard*, *Victorious*, *Vigilant* and *Vengeance*. Each Trident submarine is armed with 48 nuclear warheads, which can be simultaneously and independently targeted up to a range of 4600 miles and to an accuracy of within 120 metres. Each of these warheads has an explosive yield of up to 100 kilotons, which is approximately eight times the destructive power of the bomb dropped on Hiroshima in 1945.

CND also has concerns about possible vertical proliferation by the UK. The danger of vertical proliferation is underlined by the current recruitment of scientists for the Atomic Weapons Establishment (AWE) at Aldermaston, and the plans to upgrade nuclear weapons design and production facilities for possible replacement for the Trident nuclear weapons system. AWE Aldermaston, established in 1950, is responsible for most of Britain's nuclear research activities, as well as developing weapons designs and producing most nuclear weapon components. Indeed, it is the home of Trident warhead production, maintenance, research, and development. It is possible that it is currently equipping itself to build new nuclear weapons and a new range of site facilities are planned at a huge cost of around £2 billion which could enable AWE to build a replacement for the Trident warhead system, or to build lower yield 'mini-nukes' or battlefield nuclear weapons. The Site Development Strategy Plan, published in August 2002, included new supercomputers, a high powered laser, hydrodynamic testing facilities and non-specific 'laboratories. It is reported that AWE are intending to recruit more than 300 new scientists over the next few years.

A central feature of the new developments is the provision of testing facilities for a new warhead design. Central to the plans has been a massive new laser plant, Orion, which could be used in the simulated testing of nuclear weapons. Orion would replace the current Ministry of Defence (MoD) laser, HELEN, which has a 1 terawatt (million million watt) capacity, which despite its massive power – probably generating up to three million degrees centigrade is not strong enough exactly to reproduce the conditions experienced within a nuclear warhead. The UK government position is that by better simulating the conditions, the vastly stronger Orion will ensure the reliability of the UK's Trident warheads without resort to physical test explosions, but some analysts agree that Orion would create the ability to test, design and build both a strategic successor to Trident and a new generation of tactical nuclear weapons. This would subvert the purpose of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty that the UK government has signed and ratified, and would further undermine the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty.

## **The UK and horizontal nuclear proliferation**

CND also has concerns about the UK's involvement in horizontal nuclear proliferation.

Two cases are worthy of note. Firstly, as a member of NATO, the UK subscribes to the organisation's 1999 Strategic Concept, which states:

“The supreme guarantee of security of the Allies is provided by the strategic nuclear forces of the Allies, particularly those of the United States...They will be maintained at the minimum level sufficient to preserve peace and stability.”

This Concept also commits the UK through NATO to a nuclear first-use policy in a number of scenarios including possible nuclear attacks on Non-Nuclear Weapons States who may threaten its members' strategic interests.

Moreover, the NATO Treaty also allows for the UK to share its nuclear capabilities with other members of the Alliance. For example, under the Treaty, British nuclear weapons could be freely stationed in any one of the non-nuclear weapons member states of the Alliance, including former Soviet republics. But this would not only promote horizontal proliferation, it would also contravene Article 1 of the NPT which states that ‘Each Nuclear-Weapon State party to the Treaty undertakes not to transfer to any recipient whatsoever nuclear weapons’. In this context it should also be noted that the US stations tactical nuclear weapons on UK soil.

Secondly, under the 1958 UK/US Mutual Defence Agreement, the two countries maintain close co-operation on the design and testing of nuclear warheads. For example, not only are the missiles on the UK Trident submarines leased from the US, a recent annual report on Aldermaston has made reference to exchanges with the United States, “in preparation for the refurbishment that will be required for Trident early in the next decade.”

The most recent evidence of this US/UK relationship is signified by the signing of the June 2003 UK/US Memorandum of Understanding with the United States concerning the development of the US Missile Defence system.

## **Why CND campaigns for the elimination of British nuclear weapons**

In summary, CND opposes British nuclear weapons because it believes that all nuclear weapons are illegal, immoral, and a waste of scarce resources.

In legal terms, in 1996 the Opinion of the International Court of Justice was as follows: “*the threat or use of nuclear weapons would be generally contrary to the rules of international law applicable in armed conflict, and in particular the principles and rules of humanitarian law*”. It is, in practice, virtually impossible to imagine a situation in which nuclear weapons could be used without violating these rules.

Morally, the deliberate use by the UK of its nuclear weapons would be an international outrage, given their indiscriminate destructive power. A nuclear blast cannot discriminate between

combatants and non-combatants. Each Trident submarine carries 48 nuclear warheads and each warhead has an explosive power of up to 100 kilotons, eight times the destructive killing power of the bomb dropped on the Japanese city of Hiroshima in 1945. That bomb alone killed an estimated 140,000 people. The catastrophe facing the world in the event of a nuclear war is unthinkable – in human and ecological terms, indeed for the future existence of our planet.

Finally, the British Trident submarine nuclear weapons system is expensive. It is estimated that the UK spends up to £1.5 billion every year in research, development and maintenance of its nuclear arsenals. CND believes that this money would be better spent on the UK's social infrastructure including the health service, education, transport and care for the elderly; and could also enable the UK to increase its development budgets to the developing countries.

## **Conclusion**

CND reminds the UK government of its 2000 NPT commitments when it gave, along with the other four declared nuclear weapons, an *“unequivocal undertaking to accomplish the total elimination of their nuclear arsenals”*.

CND urges the UK government to work within the existing multilateral disarmament regime and not pursue policies of disarmament through pre-emptive war.

CND stresses the importance of the UK government working to prevent both horizontal and vertical proliferation.

In particular, CND calls on the government to take the following confidence-building measures as first steps:

- Make an unequivocal statement that it will not extend the life of the present Trident nuclear weapons system, nor replace it when its current service life expires;
- Stop any research and design work on a new generation of nuclear weapons, that may be planned or underway at Aldermaston Atomic Weapons Establishment (AWE);
- De-alert and remove all nuclear warheads from their delivery systems and place them in safe storage;
- Give an unequivocal undertaking not to allow the US the use of any base in Britain, including Fylingdales and Menwith Hill for Missile Defence or the weaponisation of space;
- Ensure that the US's tactical nuclear weapons at Lakenheath air base are returned to the US;
- Use the UK-US special relationship to “press the United States to ratify the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty” as recommended by the December 2000 report of the Foreign Affairs Select Committee;
- Immediately initiate a transparent and informed parliamentary discussion concerning the renewal or otherwise of the UK/US Mutual Defence Agreement.

