



United Kingdom
Mission to the
United Nations

MEW MDFZ Conference 2022

Opening Statement

by the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland

The United Kingdom remains committed to the establishment of a zone in the Middle East free from nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction and their delivery systems. In this regard, we recall and wholeheartedly support the 1995 Resolution on the Middle East, and we fully recognise our responsibilities as a co-sponsor of that resolution. The UK is ready to actively support and facilitate renewed regional dialogue with all States of the region, in a format that is inclusive, balanced, consensus-based and result orientated.

The Guidelines on the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones adopted by the UN Disarmament Commission in 1999 underline that such zones must be established based on arrangements freely arrived at among all the States of the region concerned. They also underline that initiatives to pursue such zones must be pursued by *all* the States of that region. It was on this basis that, while we support the overall aims of the process, the essential conditions of inclusivity and dialogue were not met in the way the process was initiated – and thus the UK abstained on the 2018 Decision.

That said, the UK took the decision to participate in the 2019 and 2021 Conferences as an observer. The UK was encouraged by the efforts of the Chair and most participants to achieve a constructive spirit and outcome, which did 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 their security

concerns will be heard. If this process is to be credible, it cannot be used to single out and isolate one state.

On that basis, the UK urges all relevant stakeholders, especially those here today, to make renewed, good faith consultations, with all relevant parties, in order to bring this issue back to consensus.

Mr President,

On the subject of good faith consultations, it is fitting to welcome and applaud the considerable effort of the majority of States Parties to reach consensus at the 10th NPT Review Conference. The UK deeply regrets the decision by one country to break consensus but welcomes the progress made at this conference, particularly regarding language on the Middle East Weapons of Mass Destruction Free Zone. The UK stands ready to work constructively with all States to identify measures to improve the Review Cycle and deliver on all of the NPT's three, mutually reinforcing pillars. The NPT remains the cornerstone of global nuclear security and civil nuclear prosperity. We continue to advocate strongly for the universalisation of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, and call on those who have not yet ratified, to do so at their earliest opportunity.

Mr President

The UK is deeply concerned by the regional security situation today.

Syria's undeclared chemical weapons stockpile remains a grave concern. It is beyond doubt that the Assad regime has murdered its own people with chemical weapons. There are eight authoritative findings of chemical weapons use by UN and OPCW independent investigations. In this context, it was right that, in April, the 25th Conference of States Parties suspended some of Syria's OPCW rights and privileges until it demonstrates compliance with the Convention and abide by its commitments under UNSCR 2118. Syria, like every other State Party, must exclude completely the possibility of using chemical weapons in any circumstances.

We also take this opportunity to strongly urge Syria to return to full compliance with its safeguards obligations, and cooperate with the IAEA in connection with *all* unresolved issues. Syria's long-standing non-compliance with its Comprehensive Safeguards Agreement grows ever more serious with time.

Iran's nuclear programme has never been more advanced than it is today. It is undermining regional and international security. Iran continues to take steps that are permanently and irreversibly upgrading its nuclear capabilities, including producing Highly Enriched Uranium and uranium metal. Since February 2021, Iran has significantly reduced IAEA access by withdrawing from JCPoA-agreed monitoring arrangements, and suspending its implementation of the Additional Protocol. On the JCPOA, a viable deal was put on the table in March which would have returned Iran to full compliance with its JCPoA commitments and returned the US to the deal - Iran prevented the conclusion of the JCPoA deal by re-opening issues, including the separate IAEA safeguards investigation. The IAEA safeguards investigation is separate from the JCPoA. We will never pressure the IAEA to end this investigation and the only way the issues can be resolved is through Iran cooperating with the IAEA by providing technically credible information.

We hope this Conference can make progress on 2019 and 2021's discussions through constructive dialogue, taking into account regional security and the developing challenges faced. IAEA safeguards are the primary tool for preventing proliferation; an Additional Protocol remains the gold standard of safeguards agreements and we encourage all states to meet this standard. We also call on all Annex II states to ratify the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, which is a vital part of the international security architecture. We call on states who have not yet done so to ratify and fully implement the Chemical Weapons Convention and the Biological and Toxins Weapon Convention; and for all states to adhere to the MTCR guidelines and principles on ballistic missiles, which restrict the proliferation of systems and associated technology, for the delivery of WMD. Such ratifications would bring greater confidence to the region and support discussions about a Middle East Weapons of Mass Destruction Free Zone.

Mr President,

The UK looks forward to engaging in constructive discussions with all stakeholders over the next few days. It remains important to ensure that any outcomes of this Conference do not preclude other relevant stakeholders from joining this process at a later stage. We hope that this process will continue to contribute towards stability in the Middle East, and also to the health of the NPT as the irreplaceable foundation

and framework for our common efforts on disarmament, non proliferation and the peaceful uses of nuclear technology.