

**Middle East WMD Free Zone Conference – November 2025**  
UK National Statement

Mr President,

On behalf of the United Kingdom, I congratulate you on your appointment as President of this Conference and express our gratitude to you for assuming this role. I also express thanks to the countries of the Middle East for their invitation to observe this 6<sup>th</sup> session of the Conference.

As a co-sponsor of the 1995 resolution, the UK remains fully committed to a zone free of all Weapons of Mass Destruction and their delivery systems in the Middle East. Such a zone would support disarmament and non-proliferation and could make a vital contribution to regional and international security.

As we have all agreed, the creation of the Middle East WMD free zone should be in line with the principles and guidelines set out by the UN Disarmament Commission in 1999. It must be established based on arrangements freely arrived at among the states of the region to ensure the zone is built on inclusivity and consent.

As a strong supporter of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), the UK continues to support Nuclear Weapons Free Zones. We welcome that this Conference will consider other WMD threats in the region, including from chemical and biological weapons and their delivery systems. We support views expressed here today on the value of exchanging experience with other regions and their Weapons Free Zones.

Mr President,

We meet against a challenging security backdrop.

Hamas committed appalling atrocities on 7 October 2023 and since then, the world has witnessed intolerable death and destruction in Gaza. We welcome the ceasefire and commend the tireless efforts of the mediators to reach a deal. We also welcome the release of all remaining hostages and stress the urgency of returning the remains of the deceased hostages. The recent surge in humanitarian aid through UN coordinated work is a vital first step. We must see more aid and assistance get into Gaza in line with the US comprehensive plan. We reiterate the importance of all parties continuing to engage constructively on the next steps outlined in the Comprehensive Plan.

Proliferation risks undermine regional confidence and progress towards a WMD Free Zone. In this regard, we underline the importance of the global safeguards regime and the role of the International Atomic Energy Agency. We remain concerned by Iran's ongoing refusal to allow the IAEA access to verify its large stockpiles of enriched uranium, including high enriched uranium.

Since 2019, Iran has exceeded limits on its nuclear programme that it had freely committed to under the JCPoA. On 28 August, in light of Iran's continued nuclear escalation, and after extensive diplomatic effort, France, Germany and the United Kingdom initiated the "snapback" mechanism, in accordance with paragraph 11 of

Security Council Resolution 2231. We reiterate that the UK remains committed to a diplomatic solution to Iran's nuclear programme.

We welcome the commitment of the new Syrian Government to eliminate the Assad regime's remaining chemical weapons programme, and their engagement with the OPCW to meet their obligations under UNSCR 2118 and the Chemical Weapons Convention. The UK has committed over £2.8m to support the OPCW in its vital work in Syria since December. Additionally, Syria's agreement to provide full co-operation and transparency with the IAEA to address past illicit nuclear activities is a positive step forward. Collectively, these are important steps by the Syrian Government to address the legacy of the Assad regime.

We hope to see continued focus within the region on counter proliferation initiatives, including the universalisation of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, the IAEA Additional Protocol, the Chemical Weapons Convention, and the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention and others, which could help provide a framework for a WMD free zone. This includes the need to reach consensus on mechanisms to strengthen the BTWC. We encourage states parties to reach agreement on such measures at the December Working Group.

Advanced conventional weapon development could pose new and increasing proliferation risks in the coming years. The UK encourages all states to consider subscribing to the Hague Code of Conduct against the proliferation of ballistic missiles. The code is an increasingly important transparency and confidence building mechanism aimed at reducing the risk of miscalculation and reducing global tensions.

Mr President,

The UK is pleased to have attended all Middle East WMD Free Zone Conferences as an observer and supports a constructive approach to achieve progress. To make this progress, all states of the region must feel able to participate meaningfully across a broad agenda, and so this process must be inclusive and reflect the interests of all countries in the region.

Looking ahead to the NPT Review Conference next year, the UK looks forward to constructive engagement and an outcome that strengthens the Treaty. We believe that progress on the Middle East WMD Free Zone discussions can play an important role in this success. At the same time, we remain committed to our obligations on disarmament, recognising that to achieve disarmament we must take a step-by-step approach within existing frameworks, continuing our work on transparency, irreversibility and verification, while preserving and strengthening the non-proliferation architecture that underpins the Treaty. We also recognise, and underline the importance of ensuring, the legitimate right of states to access nuclear energy and the peaceful applications of nuclear technology.

Thank you, Mr President.