

Supplementary written evidence – Joe Pitt-Rashid, Director of Strategy and Policy for the Defence Nuclear Organisation, Ministry of Defence

I am grateful to the International Agreements Committee for hosting me and my colleagues earlier this week. I enjoyed our discussion and appreciated the thoughtful questions of the Committee members.

I committed to writing to you to provide further information on some of the points raised during the session. Information addressing these points is provided below.

- I can confirm that amendments to Article 3(A) of the MDA make it possible for either party (or persons authorised by them) to make the transfers, communications or exchanges to the other party (or persons designated by them) set out in that Article.
The definition of “persons” is unchanged and can be found in Article 11 of the MDA. There are no security issues raised by this.
- The proposed amendments being made to the Treaty do not involve any financial commitment by the UK, nor do they commit the UK to purchase any goods or service from the US. The amendments before the Committee do not give rise to any financial considerations.
- We understand the current Congressional review period for the MDA has concluded. The MDA is an agreement for nuclear cooperation pursuant to Sections 91(c), 123, and 144(c) of the Atomic Energy Act of 1954, as amended (AEA). The AEA defines substantive and procedural requirements for proposed agreements for nuclear cooperation. We understand that Congress will use its ordinary oversight for activities associated with the MDA moving forwards. In the UK, any further amendments to the MDA within scope of the Constitutional Reform and Governance Act 2010 would be subject to Parliamentary scrutiny in the usual way.

Please see attached an annex detailing the UK’s work on nuclear non-proliferation, as requested. I hope this information addresses the Committees outstanding questions.

Thank you again for the constructive conversation.

11 October 2024

Annex A – UK work on nuclear non-proliferation

As I stated in the Committee, achieving nuclear disarmament has grown more challenging, reflecting a worsening global security environment. Russia’s nuclear rhetoric, China’s rapid nuclear modernisation, and emerging proliferation risks from Iran have further challenged global security.

The United Kingdom is a Nuclear Weapon State (NWS) that takes its nuclear responsibilities seriously. We continue to robustly challenge proliferation risks at the same time as we seek to support engagement and dialogue.

The UK pursues nuclear disarmament through the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), supports the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) in strengthening the international safeguards system, and advocates sharing the peaceful uses of nuclear technology. The best way to achieve our goals of disarmament and non-proliferation is through gradual multilateral disarmament negotiated through the NPT. The NPT remains the only credible, verifiable, transparent, and multilateral path towards disarmament and we will continue to press strongly for NPT universalisation and continue to raise this with non-NPT States Parties.

The UK has played its part over the past ten years and more through considerable leadership and active multilateral efforts.

NPT:

- The UK started the P5 process in 2009 and continues to champion this forum for mutual understanding and technical discussions on nuclear issues between the five NWS (the US, China, Russia, UK, France). The UK continues to attend meetings at expert level, supporting efforts to reduce the risk of nuclear conflict by building trust and confidence between the NWS.
- At the annual preparatory committees (PrepComs) and five-yearly Review Conferences (RevCons) reviewing progress of the NPT, the UK continues to publish papers and host side events demonstrating our commitment to our obligations (including a side event on Verification at the PrepCom in July this year in Geneva) and paving the way for a world where disarmament is possible, in a transparent, verifiable, and irreversible manner. We consult with and fund academic and think tank work on our nuclear policy and approach to arms control.
- The UK continues to lead the way on transparency. We publish our National Report (published for every NPT Review Conference – the next of which will be 2026) and always take a consultative approach to its development, giving Non-Nuclear Weapon States (NNWS) and other NWS the opportunity to challenge and question us.
- We continue to call out our adversaries, including Russia's continuous use of irresponsible nuclear rhetoric, through national and public statements, as well as through forums including UN First Committee, NPT PrepComs and RevCons. We will continue to hold North Korea to account by calling out breaches of United Nations Security Council resolutions (UNSCRs) and will continue to express profound concern over Russia's decision to veto the UNSCR which sought to uphold the Outer Space Treaty's prohibition

on the placement of nuclear weapons in Earth's orbit.

- At the upcoming UN First Committee, the UK is planning to submit a resolution on responsible space behaviours in order to ensure this topic remains part of the Prevention of an Arms Race in Outer Space (PAROS) agenda.

Verification:

- The UK plays a lead role in developing technical solutions for verifying nuclear disarmament, on which our ability to achieve and maintain a world without nuclear weapons will depend. This will be a vital enabling tool for providing confidence to NWS and NNWS alike that nuclear disarmament has taken place and is being maintained. This includes a domestic research programme and international work including the 'QUAD Nuclear Verification Partnership' with Norway, Sweden and the US, and with the International Partnership for Nuclear Disarmament Verification.

Non-Proliferation:

- We work to reinforce the safeguards mandate of the IAEA by supporting the independence of the Agency, responding to challenges to the safeguards system, encouraging Member States to maintain current high standards, and encourage universalisation of safeguards agreements including the Additional Protocol (AP), which gives the IAEA further inspection authority and provides *additional tools for verification*. The UK contributes over £20m each year to the International Atomic Energy Agency. Under the AUKUS programme we have been consulting the IAEA as we develop an appropriate, robust suite of safeguards and verification measures that will enable the IAEA to meet its technical objectives and which sets the highest non-proliferation standard.
- We continue to hold counter-proliferation dialogues with many nations around the world, including our dialogue with China held in September this year, and our dialogue with Pakistan held in May.

CTBT:

- The UK has long been an advocate for the entry into force of the Comprehensive Test-Ban Treaty. We provide nearly £5 million per year and host 13 test detection stations around the world on UK territories, that form part of the CTBT Organisation's (CTBTO) International Monitoring System (IMS).
- We continue to call out Russia's de-ratification of the treaty in public statements.

FMCT:

- We continue to call for the immediate commencement and early conclusions of negotiations on a Fissile Material Cut-Off Treaty within the Conference on Disarmament.