



UK Mission
Geneva

CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT

AGENDA ITEM 2: PREVENTION OF NUCLEAR WAR, INCLUDING ALL RELATED MATTERS

STATEMENT BY THE UNITED KINGDOM

H.E. Mr Aidan Liddle, Permanent Representative
Geneva, 20 May 2021

Mr President,

Thank you for organising today's thematic discussion on agenda item 2, and in particular the three excellent and substantive presentations we heard this morning.

Mr President,

I can be brief, because the United Kingdom's position on the question of fissile material is simple, longstanding, and well known.

The UK has had a voluntary moratorium on the production of fissile material for use in nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices since 1995. In 1998, the UK was the first Nuclear Weapon State to declare the total size of its fissile material stocks, and voluntarily placed all fissile material no longer required for defence purposes under international safeguards. This material continues to be liable to inspection by the International Atomic Energy Agency. Since then, all enrichment and reprocessing in the UK has been conducted under international safeguards.

The UK continues to believe that the path to a world without nuclear weapons has to include a non-discriminatory, multilateral and internationally and effectively verifiable treaty banning the production of fissile material for use in nuclear weapons or other explosive devices. We will continue to call for the start and early conclusion of negotiations of such a treaty in the Conference on Disarmament, as an essential step along that path. We do not believe that there is any issue pertaining to this treaty, including its scope, that cannot be resolved during the course of negotiations, nor that there is any reason for the start of negotiations to be further delayed.

We will continue to do all we can to explore ways of moving forward with an FMCT.

The UK played an active role in the UN Group of Government Experts in 2014-15, in the High-Level Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty Expert Preparatory Group in 2017-18, and in Subsidiary Body 2 of this Conference in 2018. As our three presenters have reminded us, these processes deepened the dialogue on an FMCT and identified the issues upon which future negotiators will need to focus. All that remains is for those negotiators – us, Mr President – to get to work.

* * *