

(Sir Michael Weston, United Kingdom)

We are fully committed to such negotiations, and it will be a major objective for the United Kingdom to achieve a verifiable CTB, with as wide adherence as possible, in a form which genuinely strengthens our non-proliferation efforts. Our view of a ban will be conditioned by the degree to which it meets these important criteria.

The proliferation of nuclear weapons - and of other weapons of mass destruction - poses a real threat to global stability and security. The international community must therefore intensify its efforts to constrain the spread of nuclear weapons materials and expertise. The nuclear Powers must contribute to this process, and are doing so. The global non-proliferation regime has many facets. At its heart stands the Non-Proliferation Treaty, supported by the IAEA safeguards system and national export controls. We believe a comprehensive test-ban treaty could add to this regime, most importantly by preventing proliferators from developing sophisticated nuclear weapons. A test ban will not prevent a determined proliferator from acquiring the capability to manufacture a basic explosive device. But if States can be prevented from developing their knowledge and expertise of weapon design, then a nuclear test ban will have made a significant contribution to non-proliferation.

Another important objective for us - to ensure we have a high level of confidence in our ability to maintain the safety and reliability of our independent nuclear deterrent - will remain indispensable. A CTB will pose particular challenges in this regard, but the British Government believes that the non-proliferation advantages of a CTB are sufficiently important to warrant the decision to give it full support.

As for CTB negotiations, the United Kingdom will not be aiming to achieve a Treaty which restrains only the five nuclear weapons States, as defined in the Non-Proliferation Treaty, but one which applies equally to all parties, and which binds as many countries as possible. For a CTB genuinely to help our efforts to counter the threats posed by nuclear proliferation, we also believe an effective verification regime is necessary. Only if a potential proliferator knows that any nuclear test is likely to be detected and identified as such, and that appropriate sanctions will be imposed, will he be deterred from acting in breach of his treaty obligations. The discussion of non-seismic means of verification in the NTB Ad Hoc Committee this year has been very valuable, complementing the ongoing work of the Group of Scientific Experts in developing an international seismological system. This work must be continued in order to establish which measures are needed to make up an effective verification regime. As we have made clear previously, we believe seismic monitoring will be essential, though not sufficient on its own.

We recognize the importance of multilateral negotiations in achieving a CTB that contributes to non-proliferation in this way, and we are ready to play our part in working constructively to achieve a negotiated ban. We believe that we and the other nuclear- weapons States have a particular responsibility for ensuring the success of the negotiations. We shall aim to discuss the way ahead with them, and to keep in close touch as the negotiations proceed. At the same time, we have welcomed the positive and