



Counter Proliferation & Arms Control Centre

Counter Proliferation and Arms
Control Centre
London SW1A 2HB

www.fco.gov.uk

Ms Setsuko Thurlow
International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons

By email: tim@icanw.org

21 August 2020

Dear Ms Thurlow,

Thank you for your letter to the Prime Minister about the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. Your letter has been passed to the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and I am replying from the Counter Proliferation & Arms Control Centre responsible for international nuclear issues.

I would like to thank you for sharing your moving personal experience as a survivor of the bombing of Hiroshima. The British Embassy in Japan have been grateful for the invitation to attend the Peace Memorial Ceremony in Hiroshima each year, and Her Majesty's Ambassador to Japan, Paul Madden, attended this year's ceremonies in Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The Peace Park and the museum play an important role in educating all generations about the impact the use of nuclear weapons had on the people of the city of Hiroshima. The impressive way in which the people of Hiroshima have rebuilt their city over the past 70 years stands as testimony to the resilience of the human spirit.

The United Kingdom is committed to the long-term goal of a world without nuclear weapons, in line with our obligations under the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). We believe that the NPT is the cornerstone of the international nuclear non-proliferation regime and the essential foundation for the pursuit of nuclear disarmament and the peaceful uses of nuclear energy.

As a Nuclear Weapon State that takes its responsibilities extremely seriously, the UK continues to work with international partners towards creating the conditions for a world without nuclear weapons. The UK will not sign the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) as we do not believe that this treaty will bring us closer to a world without such weapons. The TPNW fails to address the obstacles that must first be overcome to achieve lasting global nuclear disarmament. It will not improve the international security environment or increase trust and transparency.

The UK's nuclear deterrent exists to deter the most extreme threats from other states to our national security and way of life, which cannot be deterred by other means; and it will remain essential for as long as the global security situation demands. Everyone in the UK benefits from the security the nuclear deterrent provides. In addition to contributing to Scotland's security, the nuclear deterrent also brings economic benefits to Scotland. Her Majesty's Naval Base (HMNB) Clyde, where the deterrent submarines are based, is one of the largest single-site employers in Scotland, providing thousands of jobs, many highly skilled, with an associated positive impact on the local economy.

Maintaining and renewing elements of the UK's nuclear deterrent capability is fully consistent with our international legal obligations, including those under the NPT. For as long as the global security situation makes it necessary for us to retain a nuclear deterrent, the Government has a responsibility to maintain the safety and reliability of all elements of our nuclear capability. This includes the replacement and updating of obsolete elements of the system as they reach the end of their operational life.

The Government firmly believes that the best way to achieve a world without nuclear weapons is through gradual multilateral disarmament negotiated using a step-by-step approach under the NPT. Such an approach is needed in order to build trust and confidence, and to take tangible steps towards a safer and more stable world where countries with nuclear weapons feel able to relinquish them.

We will continue to press for steps towards multilateral disarmament, including the entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and successful negotiations on a Fissile Material Cut-Off Treaty within the Conference on Disarmament.

Yours sincerely,

Counter Proliferation & Arms Control Centre