



In the spotlight

Dr Kim Howells, Minister of State at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, United Kingdom

Q: *The United Kingdom (UK) and France were the first nuclear weapon States to ratify the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) on 6 April 1998. According to the then-Foreign Secretary Robin Cook, the ratification of the CTBT signaled Britain's "commitment to the goal of a nuclear-weapons-free world," calling the CTBT "a cornerstone of international efforts to prevent nuclear proliferation."*

How has the United Kingdom supported the CTBT so far?

A: We support the CTBT in a variety of ways. First of all, politically. Pending the Treaty's entry into force, we are continuing

well received statement calling for early entry into force for the CTBT.

Secondly, we give practical support. We pay our financial contributions in full and on time, and encourage everyone to do the same. We do all that we can to ensure the Treaty's verification regime will work on entry into force, for example by supporting the completion of the International Monitoring System, including the twelve stations we are responsible for, and also by getting involved in the elaboration of the on-site inspection aspects of the Treaty's verification regime, such as the Directed Exercises in 2006 leading to the Integrated Field Exercise in Kazakhstan in 2008. The Atomic Weapons Establishment

A: We would certainly agree that it was a prize worth fighting for, and it remains so. On entry into force, the CTBT will legally ban testing of nuclear weapons. It is a widely accepted key instrument in the field of disarmament and non-proliferation because it helps prevent the spread of technology and knowledge used for the development of nuclear weapons. The challenges we face in this field are stronger than ever, given the dangers posed to us all from the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. Thanks to the CTBT, there is a strong international norm against nuclear testing. So while several countries have not yet felt able to ratify the Treaty, they too are nevertheless maintaining moratoria on nuclear weapons testing.

Q: *On the day of the 10th anniversary of CTBT's opening for signature the former United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan highlighted the consequences of further delays in the entry into force of the Treaty: "Resumption of nuclear testing by one State could well lead to a single cascade of States seeking to acquire nuclear weapons...and existing nuclear weapon States racing to expand or improve their nuclear capabilities. Avoidance of such a series of events is a mission we must pursue with the utmost urgency." A few days later, North Korea informed the international community that it had tested its first nuclear weapon.*

What measures has the United Kingdom so far undertaken to encourage universalization of the CTBT?

A: First of all, I would say by being one of the first to sign and ratify the Treaty. Also by supporting events designed to promote entry into force,

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to observe a moratorium on nuclear weapon test explosions or any other nuclear explosions, a moratorium we have actually had in place since 1991. We take every opportunity to reiterate our strong political commitment to the Treaty, most recently when I attended the meeting in New York in September 2006 to launch the Joint Ministerial Statement calling for the Treaty's entry into force. The former Foreign Secretary Jack Straw also attended the Article XIV conference in New York in 2005, both under the European Union Presidency which we held at the time and in a national context, and gave a very

(AWE) at Aldermaston, for example, provided a mobile laboratory for the 2006 exercise on the base of operations; and has offered equipment and personnel for the Integrated Field Exercise. We also support building links between the CTBTO and the scientific community, so we were pleased that UK scientists took part in the symposium in August 2006 to mark the 10th anniversary of the Treaty.

Q: *The CTBT was once described as "the longest sought, hardest fought prize in the history of arms control".*

Why is the CTBT so important for nuclear non-proliferation?



like the one in New York last September and the one to come later this year under Article XIV of the Treaty. Secondly, by taking every suitable opportunity, both bilaterally and with our European partners, to encourage others to sign and ratify, in particular the remaining ten listed in Annex 2 of the Treaty. But I've been encouraged by the growing

A: It is true to say that there has been, for a number of years, a moral norm against nuclear testing. This is why North Korea's nuclear test (which, I should add, was in technical terms an unsuccessful one according to all the indications so far) crossed a red line for the international community. United

to call on North Korea to sign and ratify the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, to refrain from conducting any further nuclear tests or missile launches, and to re-establish its commitments to a moratorium on missile launching. ■

This interview was conducted before the publication of the UK Government's White Paper on the future of the nuclear deterrent, on which the UK government has informed us a debate and a decision is not expected in Parliament until March.

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breadth and strength of support for the Treaty, particularly amongst developing countries. More countries ratified the Treaty in 2006 than in 2005, including Vietnam, an Annex 2 country. This reflects an understanding that the Treaty is more important than ever, and I expect this trend to continue.

Q: *For many years it was said that the CTBT, even without having entered into force, contributed to a climate within which a stop to nuclear test explosions was regarded by many as a norm. The recent nuclear weapon test conducted by North Korea represents a direct challenge to the nuclear non-proliferation regime.*

What effect will the testing by North Korea have on the nuclear non-proliferation regime and on the moral norm against nuclear testing?

Nations Security Council Resolution 1718 highlighted the deep concern which the test caused; and the 15-0 vote at the Security Council sent a powerful message to North Korea, and any other nation who might consider a nuclear test explosion, that such actions constitute a threat to international peace and security.

The test contravened North Korea's commitments under the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) as a non-nuclear weapon State, breached the 1992 North-South Joint Declaration on the Denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula, and ignored United Nations Security Council Resolution 1695 which was issued in response to its multiple missile tests in July. The nuclear test also runs counter to the spirit of the September 2005 Declaration to which North Korea has signed up. Nevertheless, we continue

Biographical note



Dr Kim Howells was appointed Minister of State at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office in May 2005. He is responsible for the Middle East, Afghanistan and

South Asia, Counter Narcotics, Counter Proliferation, Counter Terrorism, United Nations and United Nations Reform.

Dr Howells was previously Minister of State at the Department for Education and Skills. He has also held Ministerial posts at the Department for Transport, the Department for Culture, Media and Sport, and the Department for Trade and Industry.

He is MP for Pontypridd and was educated at Mountain Ash Grammar School; Hornsey College of Art; Cambridge College of Art & Technology and Warwick University. ■