Foreign & Commonwealth Office (UK)

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2016-08-23

I join others in thanking the Malaysian Presidency for this opportunity to exchange views on Security Council Resolution 1540. And thank you to the Secretary General, and to all the briefers for their fascinating insights.

The threat of toxic, poisonous or nuclear materials falling into the hands of non-state actors, particularly terrorists, is a top priority that requires the closest cooperation between all Member States, as well as civil society and industry.

And yet, let’s be honest. This is a complex and technical subject, and we struggle at times to bring the attention that it deserves to it. Resolution 1540 is not exactly a household name, but it has far reaching impact. And the briefers did a very good job today at explaining how far reaching the new technologies can be. Both as a positive for most people in the world, and as a negative when used by terrorists or others intent on using those technologies to develop, or to deliver, weapons of mass destruction.

So let‘s be clear about why we are focusing so much on this resolution. 1540 boosts the peace and security of all states. Full implementation of 1540 means action - the passing of laws, securing of borders and safeguarding of sensitive materials.

We must never forget the tangible, real-world impacts of our work. I have no doubt that without 1540 the world would be an even more dangerous place.

That’s why this year’s Comprehensive Review matters. The review process has already given us some powerful food for thought about the progress and challenges of implementation for states.

We now know that since 2010, there has been a 17% increase across all 1540 non-proliferation measures undertaken by states worldwide. But we also know that we are only halfway in our efforts. We must work towards full, universal fulfilment of these obligations.

We know that all regions have increased implementation, with the fastest growth rates occurring in Africa and in Eastern Europe. And yet there also remains marked differences

between regions, with some much further from full implementation than others.

And we know that all sectors – nuclear, chemical, biological - have seen enhanced controls since 2010. However, it's the biological sector that lags behind globally, with about 10% fewer recorded measures than the nuclear sector.

These are important non-proliferation facts. They should shape the next steps that we take. Working through the 1540 Committee - so ably chaired by Spain– this Council must now decide how to act.

The United Kingdom looks forward to examining four areas for concrete progress by the end of this year:

First, ensuring meaningful analysis of how 1540 is being implemented as a component of the global non-proliferation architecture, including by assessing each region and sector.

Second, exploring how 1540 can be more effectively implemented in light of the new and emerging challenges that we heard about, including both evolving terrorist threats and technological developments such as 3D printing and drones.

Third, strengthening the 1540 Committee's process for matching requests with offers of assistance.

And finally, revisiting the structure and mandate of the 1540 Committee and its Group of Experts, to ensure that they have the technical, human and financial resources they need, including considering a longer-term mandate.

We look forward to discussing all these issues with all states.

1540 offers tools for states to prevent proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction. Tragically, the situation in Syria shows what happens when prevention fails. The world today continues to witness horrifying attacks in Syria involving chemical weapons, including numerous credible allegations of use, both by state actors and by non-state actors. If proven, the Asad regime's use of chemical weapons will be in direct contravention of international law and must be universally condemned.

As Kim Won-Soo told us, the Council will in the coming days review a historic and vital report by the Joint Investigative Mechanism into allegations of chemical weapons use in Syria. The United Kingdom is determined to hold those responsible for these crimes to account.

We will review the report very carefully; it will be a first step towards international justice. We owe it to the victims to examine unflinchingly the hard evidence before us and follow up until there is full accountability for all those responsible for all uses of weapons of mass destruction.

Finally, Mr. President, allow me to echo the grave concerns expressed by Japan and others about the unacceptable nuclear and missile technology tests conducted by the DPRK (Democratic People's Republic of Korea). The United Kingdom unconditionally condemns these activities, and expresses firm solidarity with Japan and all those in the region who face these dangerous provocations.

Thank you.

Source: https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/the-threat-of-toxic-poisonous-or-nuclear-materials-falling-into-the-hands-of-non-state-actors-particularly-terrorists-is-a-top-priority