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Dear Ben Donaldson,

Thank you for your letter of 8 June to the Foreign Secretary regarding the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW). The Counter Proliferation and Arms Control Centre has been asked to reply.

The UK 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 technology. The current global security situation makes strengthening the NPT ever more important.

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. However, the UK does not believe the TPNW will bring us closer to that ultimate goal. The TPNW will not address the geopolitical challenges to the security environment and it seeks quick fixes rather than building the necessary trust and consensus between states. It offers no solutions to the complex security environment, nor to the technical challenges of verifying nuclear disarmament without proliferating knowledge pertaining to nuclear weapons. The TPNW risks creating division within the international community when we need to focus on building consensus and strengthening the NPT to make progress on disarmament together. For those reasons, the UK has no plans to sign the Treaty and we did not observe the first Conference of States Parties to the TPNW.

The UK recognises the importance of engaging with the humanitarian consequences debate and listening to the views of non-Nuclear Weapon States, civil society, and those impacted by nuclear weapons. However, we had strong concerns that some civil society organisations were co-opting the Vienna Conference on the Humanitarian Impact of Nuclear Weapons to press for unilateral disarmament, rather than the process outlined in the NPT. The UK therefore did not attend the Conference.

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 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**  
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