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16 November 2016

**FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT 2000 REQUEST REF: 0993-16**

Thank you for your email of 19 October asking for information under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) 2000. You requested:

*"1. A copy of the full text of the statement made by Dr Matthew Rowland to the UN General Assembly First Committee on Disarmament and International Security on 14th October 2016 concerning the UN resolution to start negotiations on a treaty banning nuclear weapons.*

*2. Details of how the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and its ambassadors at the UN has consulted with other ministers in Her Majesty's government and with members of the UK parliament on the UK's position on the UN resolution to start negotiations on a treaty banning nuclear weapons. Please include with this exact details of the processes used to consult including dates of any meetings that have taken place or will take place and attendance at those meetings (positions represented if names cannot be given)."*

I am writing to confirm that we have now completed the search for the information which you requested.

I can confirm that the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) does hold information relevant to your request. Please find attached the information that the FCO can release to you in relation to your first request. As this document makes clear this is the printed text which should be checked against delivery. In the course of delivering his remarks, the Ambassador additionally set out how the United Kingdom intended to vote on the resolution concerning negotiations on a treaty banning nuclear weapons. At the time of the vote on this resolution, the UK also issued an explanatory note of the vote jointly with the US and France, a copy of which I attach.

Regarding your second request, there have been no consultations between the Government and Parliament specifically on the UN General Assembly resolution on a treaty banning nuclear weapons. However on 18 July 2016, Parliament debated the Successor submarine

programme to maintain the UK's independent, minimum, credible nuclear deterrent, during which the issue of a treaty banning nuclear weapons was raised.

Some of the information you have requested is exempt under section 35(1) (b) of the Freedom of Information Act, which protects communications between Ministers. Disclosure would weaken Ministers' ability to discuss controversial and sensitive topics free from premature public scrutiny.

Section 35 is a qualified exemption and I have considered whether the balance of the public interest favours release of this material. There is a general public interest in disclosure of information and I recognise that openness in government may increase public trust in and engagement with the government. These public interests have to be weighed against a strong public interest that policy-making and its implementation are of the highest quality and informed by a full consideration of all the options. Ministers must be able to discuss policy freely and frankly, exchange views on available options and understand their possible implications, particularly surrounding issues that involve sensitive national security concerns.

The candour of all involved would be affected by their assessment of whether the content of the discussions will be disclosed prematurely. If discussions were routinely made public there is a risk that Ministers may feel inhibited from being frank and candid with one another. As a result the quality of debate underlying collective decision making would decline, leading to worse informed and poorer decision making. Taking into account all the circumstances of this case, I have concluded that the balance of the public interest favours withholding this information.

Yours sincerely,

Counter Proliferation and Arms Control Centre



We keep and use information in line with the Data Protection Act 1998. We may release this personal information to other UK government departments and public authorities.