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# In full: Brown's nuclear speech

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### The full text of Gordon Brown's speech on nuclear energy and proliferation.

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[BBC News](#), Tuesday, 17 March 2009

Let me first of all welcome you to London - friends from every continent - from America to Russia, from Latin America to the Middle East, Africa to the Far East and of course from the International Atomic Energy Agency itself.

The size and diversity of this gathering is a truly global expression of the strength of our shared ambition to secure for our world peaceful nuclear power, and to reduce and remove from it the dangers of nuclear weapons.

In just two weeks time, the eyes of the world will turn to London as the leaders of the G20 nations meet here to rebuild our global economy.

At stake will be a global new deal for our economic future, with decisions that will remake the rules not just for a global economy but for a global society.

And the actions that we take in the coming weeks and months will define the values of our world - and the inheritance we will bequeath our children and our grandchildren.

Amid the pressures of a global economic crisis there will be those who argue that other challenges are a distraction, that the global economy is the only concern where there is an urgency to act or the opportunity to seize an historic moment.

But I think that is to profoundly misunderstand the world we are in today - and the one we can build for tomorrow.

For I believe that history will take a broader view, and in due course tell how in the making of a new global society and in an unprecedented time of change we had to confront four great and interconnected challenges - the challenges of global financial instability, global climate change, global poverty and, my subject today, global security.

Momentous challenges, but challenges best addressed together.

And in this world of change, the task of leadership is to name the challenges, shape them and rise to them.

And the nuclear question is absolutely central to them - more than about security, vital as it is, more than about nuclear power - and meeting the challenge of energy shortages and climate change, important as they are - it is about the values of the global society we are trying to build.

It is about the very idea of progress itself, about the foundations upon which we build our common security and a sustainable future for our planet.

In short - about what kind of world we are and what kind of world we want to be.

Taxing as these issues are, I am an optimist with faith in the future.

For I believe we are witnessing - as nations come together to address the financial crisis - the power of common purpose nations agreeing not just high aspirations but practical down to earth actions, governments acting quickly and collectively to take radical and even previously unthinkable measures "because we know now that we must succeed together, or separately fail.

And as we learn from this experience of turning common purpose into common action in our shared global society - so I believe we can together seize this time of profound change to forge for our generation a new internationalism that is both hard-headed and progressive.

A multilateralism born out of a commitment to the power of international cooperation not confrontation, founded on a belief in collaboration not isolation, and driven forward by a conviction that what we achieve together will be greater than what we can achieve on our own.

And it is this new spirit of progressive multilateralism that gives us hope that we can find within ourselves and together the moral courage and leadership the world now seeks.

Sir Michael Quinlan, who sadly died last month, and for whose work we will always be grateful, argued thirty years ago - that nuclear weapons cannot be disinvented.

Our task now, he said, "is to devise a system for living in peace and freedom while ensuring that nuclear weapons are never used, either to destroy or blackmail".

That pragmatism was right for the dark days of the Cold War.

But I believe we can and should now aim higher the only way to guarantee that our children and grandchildren will be free from the threat of nuclear war is to create a world in which countries can, with confidence, refuse to take up nuclear weapons in the knowledge that they will never be required.

I know from President Obama and the new US administration that America shares with us the ultimate ambition of a world free from nuclear weapons.

But let me be clear this will be a difficult path that will be crossed in steps, not in one leap.

With each step we must aim to build confidence, confidence that action to prevent proliferation is working and that states with weapons are making strides to live up to their commitments.

And I believe that this is the time to act to take together the next step in building that confidence for we are at a decisive moment, facing risks of a new and dangerous nuclear era of new state and perhaps even non-state nuclear weapon holders.

Once there were five nuclear weapons powers.

Now there are nearly twice as many, with the risk that there could be many more.

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Proliferation is our most immediate concern And for that reason alone it is time to act.

And there is yet another risk that of nuclear weapons falling into the hands of unstable or ideologically driven regimes, or terrorists groups like Al Qaeda.

We must all commit to prevent this from ever happening.

In 2005 the Non Proliferation Treaty Review Conference failed. We can not afford to fail next year.

So as we approach the 2010 Review Conference I want us to renew and refresh for our times the grand global bargain, the covenant of hope between nations at the heart of the treaty.

A bargain under which we reaffirm the rights and responsibilities for those countries which forgo nuclear weapons

But also a bargain under which there are tough responsibilities to be discharged by nuclear weapons states For as possessor states we cannot expect to successfully exercise moral and political leadership in preventing the proliferation of nuclear weapons if we ourselves do not demonstrate leadership on the question of disarmament of our weapons.

Under this bargain there is a right for all states to develop civil nuclear power.

But there is a responsibility for these states to reject the development of nuclear weapons.

And there is a responsibility too on nuclear weapons states to reduce their nuclear weapons

So in the coming months Britain - working with other countries - will be setting out a "Road to 2010" Plan with detailed proposals on civil nuclear power, disarmament and non-proliferation, on fissile material security and the role and development of the International Atomic Energy Agency.

We will be seeking the widest possible international engagement and consultation around this plan.

We will also host a recognised nuclear weapons state conference on nuclear disarmament issues and confidence building measures, including the verification of disarmament.

For in the same way Britain has led in challenging old orthodoxies by eliminating conventional weapons which cause harm to civilians, such as cluster munitions, I pledge that Britain will be at the forefront of the international campaign to prevent nuclear proliferation and to accelerate multilateral nuclear disarmament.

Article VI of the Non Proliferation Treaty specifically states that countries that do possess nuclear weapons agree to divest themselves of them over time.

No single nuclear weapons state can be expected to disarm unilaterally.

But I know that people have been trying to abolish nuclear weapons almost since their invention in the 1940s.

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Even during the Cold War, when they were central to defence planning, there were efforts to reduce their spread and indeed to initiate disarmament, with the introduction of the Non Proliferation Treaty.

In the 1980s Presidents Reagan and Gorbachev - leaders of the countries with by far the largest arsenals of nuclear weapons - discussed the abolition of their most powerful weapons.

And every US President of both parties since the 1960s has reaffirmed the Treaty.

If no single nuclear weapons state can be expected to disarm unilaterally, neither should it.

But step by step, we have to transform the discussion of nuclear disarmament from one of platitudes to one of hard commitments.

And we also have to create a new international system to help non-nuclear states acquire the new sources of energy they need.

Because - whether we like it or not - we will not meet the challenges of climate change without the far wider use of civil nuclear power.

For we must invest in all sources of low carbon energy - energy efficiency, renewables, carbon capture and storage and nuclear power.

Given the scale of global emissions reductions required, and the likely costs, no cost-effective low carbon technology must be off limits.

The complete lifecycle emissions from nuclear power - from uranium mining to waste management - are only between 2% and 6% of those from gas for every unit of electricity generated.

And the International Energy Agency estimates that we must build 32 nuclear reactors globally every year if we are to halve emissions by 2050.

So however we look at it, we will not secure the supply of the sustainable energy on which the future of our planet depends without a role for civil nuclear power.

And we simply cannot avoid the real and pressing challenges that presents from the safety and security of fissile material to the handling of waste.

A comprehensive multilateral strategy to allow nations safe and secure access to civil nuclear power is essential.

So this morning I want to outline the principles that must guide our progress in the months ahead - and the practical steps I believe we should consider to strengthen the global non-proliferation architecture by renewing and refreshing the global nuclear bargain for our times.

Let me be clear. We are not asking non-nuclear weapons states to refrain from proliferation while nuclear weapons states amass new weapons.

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We are asking them not to proliferate while nuclear weapon states take steps to reduce their own arsenals in line with the Non Proliferation Treaty's requirements.

It is a fair and even-handed bargain that contains two central elements.

That we enshrine the right for all nations to access civil nuclear power - safely, securely and subject to proper multilateral verification processes with tougher sanctions brought to bear on those who break the rules.

And, that nuclear weapons states must set out much more clearly the responsibilities that we too must discharge.

So what does this mean in practice'?

In the first place, we must give every nation the right to access - what President Eisenhower so memorably called - "atoms for peace".

But in doing so we must as an international community be completely confident that we are able to ensure there are appropriate mechanisms for multilateral control of the entire fuel cycle, ensuring the security of fissile material and preventing unwanted proliferation with clear, tough and immediate sanctions for those who break the rules.

Iran is a test case for this new philosophy of the right to civil nuclear power with sanctions for rule breakers.

Let me be unequivocal. Iran has the same absolute right to a peaceful civil nuclear programme as any other country.

Indeed the UK and international community stand ready to help Iran achieve it - as the opening of the Bushehr nuclear plant already shows.

But let me be equally clear that Iran's current nuclear programme is unacceptable.

Iran has concealed nuclear activities, refused to co-operate with the IAEA, and flouted UN Security Council Resolutions.

Its refusal to play by the rules leads us to view its nuclear programme as a critical proliferation threat.

Iran therefore faces a clear choice continue in this way and face further and tougher sanctions, or change to a UN overseen civil nuclear energy programme that will bring the greatest benefits to its citizens.

I hope that Iran will make the right choice and take advantage of the international community's willingness to negotiate, including President Obama's offer of engagement, rather than face further sanctions and regional instability.

So I urge Iran, once again, to work with us rather than against us on this.

The opportunity to do so remains on the table, the choice is theirs to make.

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For our own part in Britain, we will bring forward detailed plans for the responsible future management of our stocks of fissile material.

And as part of the "Road to 2010" we will consult on how best to deal with these stocks which have accumulated.

But I am committed that the UK will also lead on bringing forward proposals internationally for multilateral control of the fuel cycle.

We will seek an innovative partnership between industry, academia and government for further research and development to tackle the technical challenges involved in developing a proliferation-proof nuclear fuel cycle.

There are a number of proposals that are already being considered.

The UK's proposal for a nuclear fuel assurance or uranium enrichment bond is an important contribution to resolving this important matter.

However most of the options proposed are aimed at the front half of the fuel cycle - enrichment and fuel provision.

I believe we should now go further in considering all the options - including those that can address the challenges of handling spent fuel in a secure way.

As countries already operating civil nuclear programmes know - establishing a civil nuclear programme carries both significant costs and technological challenges.

So I would encourage countries embarking on civil nuclear programmes for the first time to consider all options.

This should include detailed examination of whether a collaborative approach - perhaps at a regional level - could provide a new opportunity to make access to civil nuclear power a reality.

Under the oversight of an international body countries could join together to share in the development of civil programmes. And this approach could be particularly beneficial in regions such as the Middle East - where already the Gulf Co-operation Council has proposed a joint nuclear technology programme for peaceful applications conforming to international regulations.

And I very much hope that this conference will generate further contributions which will inform our proposals as part of the "Road to 2010" plan this summer.

Just as we must reshape the international financial architecture to meet the challenges of a global economy - so too we must reshape the international architecture that deals with proliferation in a global society.

This will require new funds from within the international community - for a significantly changed global work programme.

The changes will be significant: a central role in the security of fissile material, a clear and proactive mandate to inspect - with enhanced powers of inspection to cover not just civil programmes, but also eventually military.

programmes, more support and training for an inspectorate that will cover both the extension of civil nuclear power and the monitoring of abuses of the Non Proliferation Treaty, and binding guarantees about the safeguards in place.

For if the International Atomic Energy Agency is to play this enlarged and reformed role, its safeguards regime would also need to be further strengthened.

This means everyone should implement the highest level of safeguards possible - such as the additional protocol, giving the IAEA the power to ensure that there is no indication of activity designed to turn peaceful nuclear energy programmes into nuclear weapons.

Beyond this we also need to look at the development of next generation safeguards which introduce even greater levels of assurance.

Any material failure to co-operate with inspections, and any material breach or withdrawal from the Non Proliferation Treaty should automatically lead to reference to the United Nations Security Council - and indeed it should be assumed that sanctions will be imposed in response to anything other than the most minor of breaches.

At the moment the international community has to prove an offence against the treaty, but in future the right to develop nuclear energy should be matched by an acknowledged obligation towards openness and transparency.

Having signed the treaty it should be that country's responsibility to prove it is adhering to the treaty and to dispel and disprove any accusations of its being undermined.

And it is vital we also ensure that terrorists can not get their hands on nuclear material.

This requires revised, stronger, and universally implemented international standards for the protection of fissile material.

And I will bring forward proposals for such standards as part of our "Road to 2010" plan.

Every nuclear state and prospective civil nuclear state must give security the highest attention.

It is an essential component of the investment in nuclear programmes.

Since 2003 in the UK we have spent more than £70 million on improving security at our Sellafield site alone - and we are committed to spending a further £220 million on the construction of a state of the art storage facility.

But we understand that to be effective security must meet the highest standards around the world - so in addition to the £270 million the UK has spent on global threat reduction projects since 2002, and a further £36.5m we will spend each year for the foreseeable future, we are doubling our contribution to the IAEA's Nuclear Security Fund.

And we will work with our partners to identify ways to strengthen the role of the Nuclear Suppliers Group, whose work is of vital importance.

And it is important to note that, in the horrific event of an attack, after-the-fact detection is now an established science

that would allow us to attribute the origins of the material used in almost any nuclear device.

We are therefore in a position to identify those responsible and thus define liability for providing such assistance to terrorists.

The supplier must accept responsibility just as the perpetrator, and thanks to the advance of science there can be no escape from justice.

To achieve our objective we need two major breakthroughs, effective and universal mechanisms to prevent proliferation to non-nuclear weapons states and active steps by nuclear weapons states towards disarmament.

Now is the time for serious commitment to both.

So the other core ambition of the "Road to 2010" proposals we will publish this summer is a credible roadmap towards disarmament by all the nuclear weapons states - through measures that will command the confidence of all the non-nuclear weapons states.

Of course, we have already seen huge cuts in weaponry - with in total 40,000 warheads destroyed since the end of the Cold War.

But what we need is more than this a forward plan for multilateral disarmament - a joint commitment shared by nuclear and non-nuclear weapons states alike.

We must begin by reducing the number of nuclear weapons still out there in the world - and between them the US and Russia retain around 95%.

The Start Treaty - the mainstay of their bilateral arms control effort - will expire later this year I welcome their commitment to work for a legally binding successor which I hope will pave the way for greater reductions to come.

For our part - as soon as it becomes useful for our arsenal to be included in a broader negotiation, Britain stands ready to participate and to act.

The nuclear choices being made today will determine whether we face a future arms race or a future of arms control. Averting the former, and promoting transparency in the latter are both vital to our common future.

So the recognised nuclear weapons states must now show unity and leadership and set tirelessly to work on a programme of confidence building measures.

I will gladly share for the benefit of all the pioneering work that we have been doing in the UK on the science of verifying warhead destruction.

Our Atomic Weapons Establishment, working with partners from Norway, have been developing techniques that can provide reassurance that nuclear weapons have been destroyed, without giving away sensitive information about warhead design.

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Britain has cut the number of its nuclear warheads by 50% since 1997. And we are committed to retaining the minimum force necessary to maintain effective deterrence.

For future submarines our latest assessment is that we can meet this requirement with 12 missile tubes, not the 16 on current submarines.

In Britain our operationally available warheads number fewer than 160 and the government keeps this number under constant review.

If it is possible to reduce the number of UK warheads further, consistent with our national deterrence requirements and with the progress of multilateral discussions, Britain will be ready to do so.

And in the meantime, we must drive forward the multilateral agenda.

The first steps of which are to commence urgent negotiations without preconditions on a Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty, and for all states to sign and ratify the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty.

States have national interests, but capping the production of weapons-usable fissile material and outlawing the testing of nuclear weapons are two powerful and achievable goals that I believe are consistent with the long-term needs and interests of every state.

So as we stand together against those who would seek to threaten our security and in some cases even our existence, I offer today a practical plan to deliver on the pledges we have made.

For today is a time for leadership, confidence and common purpose, not weakness, withdrawal or retreat.

So let us go forward, fully recognising the importance of the task before us for the sake of future generations across the world, let us ensure that the chapter of history that we write together - our generation, here, today - tells the story of a common journey towards a world that is free from the fear of its own destruction.

Let this be a journey of hope in which hard-headed cooperation by friends who were once foes defines our modern age, underpinned by a new covenant of hope that brings us a truly global society not of enemies fearful of each other but of partners with the confidence to work together.