

Memorandum from Plaid Cymru

Plaid Cymru welcomes the Defence Committee's inquiry and this opportunity to respond to the White Paper.

Plaid Cymru believes that nuclear weapons are unusable, that the expense cannot be justified and that they are morally and legally wrong.

We therefore oppose the replacement of the Trident nuclear weapon system and demand that the UK Government honours its commitment under the nuclear Non Proliferation Treaty and disarms rather than preparing to rearm.

We ask the Defence Committee to take into account in particular;

- That nuclear weapons would not defend the UK from the security threats it faces now and in the future, including terrorist attacks and climate change.

- That Britain is encouraging non-nuclear states to gain access to nuclear weapons by demonstrating our long term commitment to them and emphasising their importance to a country's security. This undermines the UK's condemnation of other states for attempting to become nuclear powers.

- That the International Court of Justice Advisory Opinion on Nuclear Weapons of July 1996 and the Non Proliferation Treaty of 1968 declared that there was an obligation to pursue nuclear disarmament

- That when the decision was made in 1980 to replace the Polaris nuclear weapon system with Trident, the UK Parliament was not properly informed of either its existence or cost. It is essential that there is proper parliamentary scrutiny, a full debate and a free vote in the final decision.

- That it has been conservatively estimated that replacing Trident would cost more than £15 billion, not including the full cost of decommissioning, dealing with waste or contamination. The full cost must be made clear and weighed against other funding priorities such as health and education.

Based on its planned lifespan, the current Trident system could remain operational until around 2025. The intervening years should be used to plan disarmament and implement the NPT Treaty internationally. This time could also be used to find alternative uses for the skills of the current workforce and provide retraining where necessary.

17th January 2007