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LETTER DATED 11 SEPTEMBER 1987 FROM THE HEAD OF THE DELEGATION
OF THE UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN AND NORTHERN IRELAND
ADDRESSED TO THE SECRETARY-GENERAL OF THE CONFERENCE

I should be grateful if the statement that I delivered at the time of the adoption of the Final Document of the Conference on the Relationship between Disarmament and Development could be circulated as a Conference document. I attach a copy of the text.

(Signed) J. A. BIRCH
Head of the Delegation of the United
Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern
Ireland

Annex

STATEMENT BY THE HEAD OF THE DELEGATION OF THE UNITED KINGDOM OF
GREAT BRITAIN AND NORTHERN IRELAND AT THE 14TH MEETING OF THE
INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE, ON 11 SEPTEMBER 1987

My delegation has taken a full part in the negotiations that have led us to the adoption of the document that we have before us today. Throughout the Conference we have emphasized three points: first: the complex nature of the relationship between disarmament, development and security; second: the necessity for transparency in the provision of estimates on military expenditure, to facilitate any reduction of military budgets; third: the importance of maintaining the credibility of the United Nations and its development institutions. My Government believes that the document before us does not adequately reflect these points.

As I made clear in my opening statement to this Conference my Government is fully committed to disarmament and to development, each for its own sake. We believe that both can contribute to international security. But disarmament measures which do not take into account national security cannot contribute to security on a broader plane. Nor can we endorse the suggestion that disarmament should be pursued simply for the purpose of releasing financial resources for other uses.

We fully recognize that resources may be released as a result of arms limitation and disarmament measures. Before this can be demonstrated, however, it is necessary for all countries to provide accurate information on the level and allocation of military expenditure. For our part we shall continue to provide such information, both domestically and to the United Nations. We hope others will do the same. As we have pointed out during this Conference, it cannot be assumed that savings will result from all disarmament measures, and particularly not from those currently under negotiation.

My Government will continue to maintain its substantial aid programme; however, if any savings do materialize from disarmament measures, we reserve the right to allocate these in accordance with our own priorities through the channels we deem most appropriate, bearing in mind socio-economic developmental needs and international commitments.

We are also concerned about the improper citation of the Charter of the United Nations and the juxtaposition of Charter language with language that represents the views of a particular regional grouping. We believe that the text should have made clear that it is the Security Council which is entrusted with the responsibility for determining the existence of any threat to the peace, breaches of the peace and acts of aggression which threaten international peace and security. My Government cannot subscribe to any attempt to pre-empt that role.

Throughout the document we have just adopted, great stress is laid on the dislocation caused to the world economy by global military spending - spending

estimated at 6 per cent of the world gross national product. The other 9 per cent of the world gross national product is ignored in an attempt to ascribe the problems faced by the world community to military spending rather than to other economic factors. We believe this analysis to be fundamentally flawed and to detract from the value of the document.

The security policy pursued by a State will always be determined by how that State considers it is best able to ensure its own safety. We fully agree that it is for each nation to determine the level of military expenditure it deems necessary for its own security. For 40 years our policy of defence and deterrence has provided that level of security, and my Government remains committed to it. By devoting so much attention to defence expenditure in the industrialized world, the high military budgets and the questions of arms production in many developing countries have been ignored.

Nevertheless, this Conference has brought together nations of the world on the important and compelling subjects of disarmament, development and security. Our reservations about the Final Document are known to you. But in the spirit in which we entered this negotiation and in keeping with our commitment to the United Nations and its Charter, we agreed to join the consensus in adopting this Final Document.
