

Information Circular

INFCIRC/656

Date: 15 September 2005

General Distribution

Original: English

Communication dated 5 September 2005 received from the Permanent Mission of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the Agency concerning a letter from the Government of the United Kingdom to the Secretary General of the League of Arab States

1. The Secretariat has received a Note Verbale dated 5 September 2005 from the Permanent Mission of the United Kingdom, attaching a letter dated 31 August 2005 from the Minister of State at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office to the Secretary General of the League of Arab States.
2. In the light of the request expressed by the Permanent Mission of the United Kingdom in that Note Verbale, the Note Verbale and the attached letter are hereby circulated for the information of all Member States.

United Kingdom Mission
Vienna
Note Verbale: 31/05

Date: 5 September 2005

The Permanent Mission of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland presents its compliments to the Director General of the International Atomic Energy Agency and has the honour to refer to the letter to the Director General from Mr. Amre Moussa, Secretary General of the League of Arab States dated 8 August 2005 which the Secretariat circulated as INFCIRC/654.

The Permanent Mission of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland asks that the attached letter to Mr. Moussa from Kim Howells, Minister of State at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office be circulated to all IAEA Member States.

The Permanent Mission of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland avails itself of this opportunity to renew to the International Atomic Energy Agency the assurances of its highest consideration.

[stamp of the United Kingdom Mission, Vienna]

31 August 2005

Secretary General Amre Moussa
League of Arab States



Foreign &
Commonwealth
Office

London SW1A 2AH

From The Minister of State

Dear Secretary General

Thank you for your letter of 8 August, to the Foreign Secretary, about the transfer of 'heavy water' from Norway to Israel in 1958.

I welcome the opportunity to set out the British Government's position with regard to the points you raise about media reports based on files, which have been publicly available at the UK National Archives since 1988. The UK was not in fact a party to the sale of heavy water to Israel, but did negotiate the sale back to Norway of surplus heavy water, which it had originally sold to the UK some two years earlier. At the time there was no international safeguards system in place and the decision as to whether to require safeguards was one for the national government concerned.

It remains the longstanding policy of the British Government to encourage the development of nuclear programmes for peaceful uses and we have consistently worked for a more peaceful Middle East. We fully support calls for a Middle East free from all weapons of mass destruction and strongly support the concept of a Middle East Nuclear Weapons Free Zone (MENWFZ). It is in this regard that we have called upon all countries in the region to adhere to international non-proliferation regimes, as a means of complementing and strengthening peace and security in the region.

Yours sincerely
Kim

KIM HOWELLS