Australia believes that issues related to missiles raise serious concerns for international peace and security. The proliferation of ballistic missiles - the prime delivery vehicle for weapons of mass destruction - can have a particularly destabilising impact on regional and global security. These issues demand appropriate attention and a concerted response from the international community, including through the United Nations. Australia is a strong and active supporter of ballistic missile non-proliferation efforts. We welcome the constructive contribution made in this regard by the Panel of Governmental Experts, which included an Australian expert.

Regrettably, however, we continue to have a number of substantive difficulties with the resolution entitled "Missiles", notably its failure to highlight the importance of ballistic missile proliferation to international security. We have therefore again abstained in the vote on this resolution. Australia moreover questions the utility of the proposal to convene a further Panel of Governmental Experts to explore the issue of missiles in all its aspect. The report of the current Panel does not, in our view, provide a sufficient basis - in the form of specific follow-up recommendations - for further work capable of meaningfully advancing consideration of this issue. It is also regrettable that the resolution makes no mention of the International Code of Conduct against Ballistic Missile Proliferation (ICOC) to be formally launched in The Hague on 25-26 November 2002. The ICOC represents a significant and concrete step in international efforts to curb the spread of ballistic missiles.

Australia remains committed to doing what it can in support of constructive international efforts to address missile-related security concerns.