FIRST COMMITTEE
20 October 2006

DISARMAMENT MACHINERY: THE CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT

Statement by HE Caroline Millar
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(Check against delivery)

Madam Chair

For ten years the Conference on Disarmament has failed to deliver for the international community.

Successive calls for action from this Committee and other forums have gone un-heeded.

The failure of the Conference to negotiate a Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty despite repeated calls for action, including in the 1995 NPT Review and Extension Conference Principles and Objectives document, is a particular concern given the persistent threat from nuclear proliferation and terrorism.

The status quo of a deadlocked Conference is unacceptable; it cannot be allowed to continue.

Madam Chair

Encouragingly, the Conference is showing signs of renewed determination to move break through its impasse.
This year the Conference held one of its more substantive sessions.

That it did so owes much to the innovation and will of the six CD Presidents – Poland, the Republic of Korea, Romania, the Russian Federation, Senegal and Slovakia.

Their effort provided the basis for sustained and detailed debate on all issues throughout the year – including vital international security issues not previously addressed by the CD, such as MANPADS.

Australia commends the six Presidents for their efforts.

And we look forward to working with the incoming Presidents of the CD’s 2007 session to help the Conference return to its primary task of negotiation.

But we also recognise that the difficulties besetting the Conference will not be resolved by simple procedural fixes.

It will require political commitment and will from all states to achieve progress.

In this regard, all member States of the CD need to demonstrate the same innovation and flexibility of this year’s CD presidents.

States need to move beyond past proposals that have failed to offer a way forward after several years and look to new approaches.

Australia was one of the many states that supported the A5 proposal as a possible basis for consensus in the Conference. We still could.

It is clear, however, that this proposal does not enjoy consensus and will not deliver the Conference from its impasse.

It is time to look for new approaches that will actually address the security needs of the international community.

The Australian delegation remains fully flexible about such approaches.

Madam Chair

It is clear, particularly in the wake of the DPRK test of a nuclear weapon, that the international community can ill afford another decade of deadlock in the CD.

We must act, beginning with negotiation of the issue ripest for negotiation – an FMCT – while continuing our substantive deliberations on all other issues vital to international security.

I thank you.