Mr Chairman,

Australia has a history of determined activism in support of nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament and the goal of a nuclear weapon-free world. The Australian Prime Minister, Mr Rudd, reaffirmed Australia’s commitment to working with other nations towards this goal in his statement to the General Assembly last month.

This commitment led Australia, with our close friend and partner Japan, to establish an International Commission on Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament. The Commission aims to create the political and policy consensus necessary to elicit real results on non-proliferation and disarmament in advance of and at the 2010 Review Conference of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), and beyond.

Nuclear weapon states’ leadership

Mr Chairman,

We look to states possessing nuclear weapons to exercise leadership. We were greatly encouraged by the bold re-statement of a commitment to a world without nuclear weapons by US President Obama in his 5 April speech in Prague. Support for this goal by the United States and the Russian Federation – holders of some ninety-five percent of the
world’s nuclear weapons – has helped generate greater momentum towards nuclear disarmament than at any time since the burst of international activity in the 1990s following the end of the Cold War.

This momentum has been increased by the United Nations Security Council’s adoption by consensus of resolution 1887 on nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament on 24 September.

Australia warmly welcomed the announcement in June 2009 by the United States and the Russian Federation to negotiate a legally binding and verifiable successor agreement to the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START) before its expiration at the end of this year. Intensive negotiations are underway. We hope they will be successful and will lead to continued bilateral arms reductions between the two countries, and further such action by others.

Australia has also been encouraged by the decisions of other nuclear weapon states - by the United Kingdom’s decision to reduce its fleet of Trident submarines and its number of nuclear warheads, by France’s decisions to reduce its nuclear warhead capacity to less than 300 and to dismantle facilities which produce fissile material for nuclear weapons, and by China’s statement that it is committed to a world free of nuclear weapons.

As positive as all these steps are, Australia seeks deeper, faster, more transparent and irreversible reductions in nuclear arsenals in the nuclear weapon states, in accordance with their obligations under Article VI of the NPT.

We look to states possessing nuclear weapons both within and outside the NPT to reduce the numbers of these weapons, to reassess and limit the role of nuclear weapons in their security policies and to reduce further the operational status of their nuclear weapons in ways that promote global security and stability.

Non-nuclear weapons states’ responsibilities

Mr Chairman

The burden of responsibility for nuclear disarmament is not the nuclear-weapon states’ alone.

A world without nuclear weapons requires an equally strong commitment by non-nuclear weapon states not to acquire nuclear weapons and to accept stringent international safeguards on their civil nuclear facilities. The vast majority of the world’s nations, including Australia, have made such commitments and honour them scrupulously – because they judge it in their national security interests to do so.

But the actions of a few states are undermining the global consensus to contain the spread of nuclear weapons.

The DPRK’s nuclear tests, most recently in May 2009, are strikingly at odds with the renewed momentum on nuclear disarmament. These tests follow a history of DPRK non-compliance with its IAEA nuclear safeguards obligations and defiance of UN Security
Council resolutions. UNSCR 1874 sent a clear message to the DPRK that the international community expects it to abide by its obligations under all relevant Security Council Resolutions and the commitments it has made in the Six-Party Talks to abandon its nuclear weapons program. We call on the DPRK to return to the Six-Party Talks without delay and work constructively towards denuclearisation.

Iran’s refusal to abide by binding Security Council resolutions and failure to cooperate fully with the IAEA is also deeply troubling. Recent disclosure of Iran’s covert second enrichment facility reinforces Australia’s concerns, and those of the international community, about the nature of Iran’s nuclear program. Further to the 1 October meeting in Geneva, we encourage Iran to work seriously with the international community to address these concerns.

Nuclear terrorism risks

Mr Chairman

All states need to take effective measures to ensure the safety and security of nuclear material. The possibility of nuclear materials getting into the hands of terrorists remains of deep concern. Australia warmly welcomes President Obama’s planned nuclear security summit in 2010. We call on all states to implement fully UN Security Council resolution 1540.

First Committee outcomes: practical steps

Decisions taken in First Committee can help build the necessary political support for practical steps to strengthen non-proliferation and disarmament.

We hope this year’s Committee will see increased support for the resolution presented annually by Japan on Renewed Determination towards Elimination of Nuclear Weapons. Australia sponsors and strongly supports this resolution.

Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT)

This year Australia will be the lead sponsor on the annual CTBT resolution. We urge all states to support it.

At the CTBT Article XIV Conference in New York last month, we saw renewed impetus for the entry into force of the treaty. Australia welcomed the United States’ participation in an Article XIV Conference for the first time in nearly a decade and strongly supported President Obama’s commitment to “move forward with ratification...and work with others to bring the Treaty into force so that nuclear testing is permanently prohibited.”

Australia’s also welcomes recent expressions of support for ratification and entry into force of the CTBT by China and Indonesia.

We continue to call on all States who have not yet done so to ratify the Treaty without delay, especially those nine States whose ratification is required for entry into force of the CTBT.
Fissile Material Cut-Off Treaty (FMCT)

Australia will sponsor the FMCT resolution at this First Committee and urges all states to support a strong text.

As one of the six Presidents of the 2009 Conference on Disarmament, Australia worked tirelessly with our P6 colleagues and with all CD members to adopt a balanced program of work including the commencement of negotiations on a verifiable FMCT: a long-standing goal of the international community.

But despite the historic agreement on 29 May to adopt a program of work after years of inactivity, the Conference on Disarmament has been unable to implement it. The reasons for this would seem to be institutional inertia and, more significantly, a calculation by a very few that stopping the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons may not be in their security interests. If true, such a calculation would seem to run counter to current international trends and would be deeply worrying. If it is not to be consigned to irrelevance, the Conference must move quickly in 2010 not only to adopt a program of work but to start working, to start negotiating. For this to happen, we may also need engagement at political levels outside the CD to convince hold-out states that stopping the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons enhances the security of all.

Nuclear weapon free zones

Mr Chairman

Australia is pleased to support a number of nuclear weapon free zone resolutions this year. This reflects our historic support for nuclear weapon free zones freely arrived at by regional states. We are proud of our founding role in the South Pacific Nuclear Weapon-Free Zone.

We warmly welcome the 2009 entry into force of the Treaty of Pelindaba which creates an African nuclear weapon free zone. By entering into force, the Treaty of Pelindaba – in conjunction with the Latin American, South Pacific and South East Asian nuclear weapon free zones – has effectively created a Southern Hemisphere free of nuclear weapons.

Nuclear weapon free zones provide practical security benefits to their members including through adherence by nuclear weapon states to the protocols containing negative security assurances. We urge all nuclear weapon states that have not done so to sign and ratify the protocols to the various nuclear weapon-free zone treaties. We look forward to the proposed second conference in 2010 of states parties and signatories to treaties by which nuclear weapon free zones are established.

The 2010 NPT Review Conference

Mr Chairman
This First Committee takes place six months before the 2010 NPT Review Conference. Given the renewed energy and focus world leaders have brought to the disarmament agenda, the Review Conference has the potential to shape future non-proliferation and disarmament efforts in a decisive and meaningful way. NPT parties must seize this opportunity.

The 2010 Review Conference must reaffirm the collective security benefits provided by the NPT and it must deliver results across all three pillars: nuclear disarmament; non-proliferation; and the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. In addition to undertaking a detailed review of the Treaty, the Conference should issue some kind of blueprint for action. With respect to the first pillar, this could be something along the lines of the 2000 Review Conference’s 13 practical steps.

We should use the opportunity afforded by this First Committee session to build support for strong NPT Review Conference outcomes.

A universal commitment

Mr Chairman

All states need to undertake non-proliferation and disarmament obligations and comply with them. This includes both NPT parties and non-parties. Australia calls on those states outside the NPT – India, Pakistan and Israel – to join the Treaty as non-nuclear weapon states. Meantime, we urge them to accept non-proliferation and disarmament disciplines to the maximum extent possible.

The International Commission on Nuclear Non-proliferation and Disarmament

Mr Chairman,

I referred at the beginning of this statement to the International Commission on Nuclear Non-proliferation and Disarmament established by Australia and Japan last year.

This independent Commission, chaired jointly by former Australian Foreign Minister Gareth Evans and former Japanese Foreign Minister Yoriko Kawaguchi, aims to produce a comprehensive, practical and action-oriented report early in 2010. We expect the report will produce recommendations on disarmament, on non-proliferation, on the peaceful uses of nuclear energy and on the interconnections between them.

The Commission has met across regions, with nuclear weapon states and non-nuclear weapon states, with developed and developing countries, with NPT parties and non-parties. The Commission has held meetings in Washington, Moscow, Beijing, Santiago, Cairo and New Delhi. Its inclusive approach and extensive reach has helped generate valuable new thinking which, it hopes, will help shape global thinking and build consensus both in the NPT Review Conference context and beyond.

Finally, Mr Chairman
Australia will promote strong outcomes in this Committee because they are intrinsically worthwhile, because they will help generate needed momentum to ensure successful outcomes at the 2010 NPT Review Conference and because they will enhance the security of all.

Thank you.