First Committee
14 October 2010

Thematic discussion on Nuclear Weapons

Statement by H.E. Peter Woolcott
Ambassador and Permanent Representative
of Australia to the Conference on Disarmament

(Check against delivery)

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 Foreign Minister, Mr Rudd, reaffirmed Australia’s commitment to this goal in his address to the General Assembly last month.

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

In this regard, Australia hopes that this year’s Committee will see increased support for the resolution presented annually by Japan, retitled on United Action towards Elimination of Nuclear Weapons. Australia sponsors and strongly supports this resolution.

Last year saw, for the first time, the co-sponsorship by the five nuclear weapons States of the resolution on the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. Along with fellow sponsors New Zealand and Mexico, we hope to build on the success of this resolution and encourage all States to support it.
Australia also hopes the resolution presented by the Republic of Korea on *Preventing and Combating Illicit Brokering Activities* will again enjoy consensus as it did two years ago. The resolution addresses the proliferation risk posed by illicit brokering, including of materials, equipment and technology that could contribute to the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. Australia sponsors and strongly supports this resolution.

Mr Chairman

It is good to reflect on the success of May this year, when the NPT Review Conference reaffirmed the NPT as the cornerstone of the nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation regimes, and adopted by consensus an action plan to strengthen these regimes.

As Australia has already noted in this Committee, the NPT Review Conference outcome was an historic achievement, with an action plan unprecedented in its scope and in its balance across the NPT's three pillars – disarmament, non-proliferation and the peaceful uses of nuclear energy.

A great deal of focused and effective diplomatic effort which preceded the Conference helped create the environment for success.

This included:

- the conclusion of New START by Russia and the United States;
- the United States’ Nuclear Posture Review which reduced the role of nuclear weapons in US national security policy;
- the Nuclear Security Summit with its high level of attendance and the powerful message that all States cooperate to prevent nuclear terrorism, by securing nuclear materials, and curbing nuclear smuggling;
- the entry into force of the Treaty of Pelindaba which – 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, and;
- the substantive contribution of the International Commission on Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament, which Australia and Japan jointly sponsored.

But none of us should – or do – pretend that the outcome was easy to achieve. There were plenty of tough issues to resolve. None tougher than the willingness of the NPT membership to work towards implementing the 1995 resolution on a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons as well as other weapons of mass destruction. Australia welcomes the commitment to a Conference in 2012 on this issue.
And while it is good to reflect on the success of May this year, it is better and more important to reflect on the road ahead.

Mr Chairman

The challenge for all of us remains to ensure that the success of the 2010 NPT Review Conference is not lost. We must not look back to the debates which were concluded in May.

We must work collectively to implement the agreed outcomes and to achieve real results. And this work cannot wait until the next Preparatory Committee meeting in 2012.

Australia welcomes the initiative of the nuclear-weapons states to meet in Paris next year to discuss their role in implementing the action plan.

And as Australia, Japan and others have already noted in this Committee, Australia and Japan have sought to generate momentum in the implementation of the action plan by bringing together a number of countries with a strong commitment to nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation and to the NPT for this very purpose.

Ministers of these countries met on 22 September in New York and pledged jointly to advance the nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation agenda as mutually reinforcing processes.

In their forward-looking statement, which is available to delegations, they agreed to focus efforts on further reducing the number and role of nuclear weapons; contributing to the nuclear weapon States’ steps to improve transparency; enhancing cooperation with the IAEA; pursuing universalisation of Additional Protocols in our regions; supporting early entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT); and encouraging negotiations on a Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty (FMCT).

Mr Chairman

Taking the action plan forward will not be easy. Despite the tangible and strong mood for action on arms control issues – particularly in nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation – there remain obstacles in the road, making even the early and essential steps to a nuclear weapon-free world difficult.

The proliferation and security challenges posed by the DPRK, Iran and their nuclear activities are of paramount concern. Australia strongly supports the actions of the UN Security Council to address these challenges.
It is disappointing that the CTBT is still not yet in force, despite having been opened for signature more than a decade ago.

Australia warmly welcomes Indonesia's movement towards ratification. We are encouraged by the US Administration's ongoing support for the CTBT and its commitments to pursue US ratification.

We continue to urge those States currently outside the CTBT to take steps to ratify it as soon as possible, especially those nine States whose ratification is required for entry into force.

And Mr Chairman

It is scandalous that 15 years after the Shannon Mandate, we are still waiting for the start of negotiations on the Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty (FMCT).

As Foreign Minister Rudd noted in his address to the General Assembly last month, "if we have a Conference on Disarmament, it should do disarmament – not pretend".

The FMCT is a physical precondition to reaching our collective goal of a world free of nuclear weapons.

Australia urges those States which continue to produce fissile material for weapons purposes should cease immediately and join a global moratorium.

And Australia calls for concerted and sustained work on the FMCT to begin – preferably in the Conference on Disarmament, but if need be, elsewhere.

Australia is not interested in finger pointing. We are interested in work.

If ever we are to reach the desired summit of a world without nuclear weapons, the next base camp must be an FMCT. If any country does not share that goal, then at least it ought to get out of the way.
Mr Chairman

You may be assured that Australia will support in this Committee practical and results-focused efforts to ensure implementation of the 2010 NPT Review Conference outcomes which are aimed ultimately at enhancing the security of all.

Thank you.