First Committee
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Thematic statement on other weapons of mass destruction

Statement by Mr Paul Wilson
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(Check against delivery)

Mr Chairman

The proliferation of chemical and biological weapons remains a serious threat to global and regional security.

Countering this threat demands undiminished commitment to strengthening the Biological Weapons Convention, the Chemical Weapons Convention, UN Security Council Resolution 1540 and related multilateral export control regimes.

Mr Chairman

Australia values the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC) and the important role it plays in strengthening security and public health outcomes nationally and globally.

Australia considers the BWC's 2007-2010 intersessional program to have been valuable in maintaining the active engagement of States Parties in the work of the BWC and in related biosecurity issues. And Australia has continued to play an active role. For example, just last month, the Philippines, the United States and Australia co-chaired an ASEAN Regional Forum workshop in Manila on biosecurity which brought together representatives of the human health, veterinary and security sectors of ARF participating countries.

Australia sees this year's Review Conference as an important opportunity to strengthen the BWC, an opportunity States Parties should not miss. We call on all States Parties to
help build a positive consensus on practical outcomes in Geneva in December. And we take this opportunity to thank the President-designate, Ambassador Paul van den Ijssel of the Netherlands, for his highly consultative approach in preparing for the Review Conference.

For our part, Australia is looking for a substantive review of the BWC at the Review Conference, as well as agreement on an effective intersessional program between 2012-16 which will assist States Parties to further develop common understandings and promote effective action on a range of issues. These include: effective national implementation; enhancing compliance; practical measures to enhance the implementation of international cooperation activities under Article X; reviewing the Confidence Building Measures; and addressing advances in science and technology through more regular reviews. To support these aims, we foresee a renewal of the mandate of the Implementation Support Unit whose work on behalf of all States Parties has been both valuable and highly regarded.

With partners in our region, Australia is presenting proposals for the establishment of working groups to take a fresh look at compliance issues and to review the rapid developments in the life sciences more regularly. We look forward to the proposals of other States Parties.

In our preparations for the Review Conference, Australia has particularly appreciated discussions with ASEAN states at the Conference Week for East Asia and the Pacific held in Manila in 27 June to 1 July 2011. This regional workshop, co-hosted by the Philippines, the United States, the European Union and Australia, was one of a number of useful events organised and hosted by States Parties in different geographic regions, and sought to exchange ideas among stakeholders in our region. Australia has also appreciated our continuing association with the JACKSNNZ countries.

But building a consensus in December will require all States Parties, from all regions, to work together. We can and must do so. The BWC can be stronger, in both its implementation and its membership, and it is worth the effort. In this respect, Australia pledges its support to the achievement of a successful Review Conference, and urges all States not-Party to the BWC to join without further delay.

Mr Chairman,

The Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) also plays an integral role in the international security regime and contributes to global non-proliferation efforts. The fact that almost 62 per cent of declared chemical weapons stockpiles have been destroyed since entry into force of the CWC demonstrates that the CWC is working well. With the final deadline for destruction of all chemical weapon stockpiles approaching in April 2012, we encourage chemical weapons possessor states to make every effort to ensure completion of destruction by the earliest possible date.

Australia is committed to working with others to uphold the strength and integrity of the CWC and to achieving the goals of universal adherence, coupled with full and effective implementation of the CWC; the destruction of all existing chemical weapons; and maintenance of this position through effective verification regimes. Australia pledges its support and assistance in the fulfilment of these objectives and urges all States not-Party to the CWC to join without further delay.

We strongly encourage all CWC States Parties which have not fully implemented their Article VII obligations to continue their efforts to establish a National Authority, as well
as other measures, including the criminalisation of the prohibitions contained within the CWC.

Mr Chairman

Australia also continues to provide active support to the export control regimes which support non-proliferation efforts.

We chair the Australia Group, a cooperative and voluntary group which strengthens global security by making it harder and more expensive for would-be proliferators to obtain the dual-use materials, equipment and technology sought to develop chemical or biological weapons. The Australia Group common guidelines and export control lists provide an international benchmark to help all UN Member States fulfil their obligations under UN Security Council Resolution 1540 and related Resolutions. We are encouraged that an increasing number of countries are drawing on the work of the Australia Group to strengthen their national control systems. It is through initiatives like the Australia Group that we can work together to address proliferation challenges.

However, none of us can afford to be complacent. Globalisation, rapid scientific developments, the availability of increasingly sophisticated production techniques, and new procurement channels mean that we need to be constantly vigilant and proactive. It is our collective job to ensure that we address these new challenges in a co-operative manner.

Australia is active in working with partners in our region to enhance security in this regard. We collaborate closely with regional partners to share experiences and to strengthen national and regional capabilities. We look forward to working with ASEAN Regional Forum countries over the next series of Intersessional Meetings on Non-Proliferation and Disarmament which Australia will co-chair with the Philippines and Japan.

Australia calls on all UN Member States to ensure they have in place the necessary measures to avoid being unwitting agents of proliferation through direct sourcing of WMD-related goods or through transit, transhipment and brokering activity.