Mr Chairman

Australia remains deeply concerned by the threat to global and regional security posed by chemical and biological weapons. And as contemporary events show, this threat is current. But we must be clear: there are no circumstances justifying the use of such weapons.

Countering this threat demands undiminished commitment to strengthening implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention, the Biological Weapons Convention, UN Security Council Resolution 1540 and its successor resolutions, as well as related export control regimes. It also requires tailored responses to regional proliferation dynamics.

As well as nurturing and strengthening the multilateral infrastructure which underpins our ambitions to end for ever the scourge of WMD, it remains vital that States have in place the necessary measures to avoid being unwitting agents of proliferation through direct sourcing of WMD-related goods or through transit, transhipment or illicit brokering activity.

And in this regard, Australia strongly supports the Republic of Korea which is again presenting its biennial, cross-cutting resolution “Preventing and combatting illicit brokering activities”. We encourage strong support and co-sponsorship for this resolution; brokering must not be allowed to provide a loophole for efforts to combat proliferation, whether in the conventional or WMD-related field.

Mr Chairman,

The Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) plays an integral role in the international security regime and contributes to global non-proliferation efforts.
States Parties can be decidedly proud of the achievements of the Convention since its entry into force. Thus far, seventy-five per cent of the world’s declared chemical weapons stockpiles have been verifiably destroyed. Chemical weapons possessor states need to make every effort to ensure all remaining stockpiles are destroyed at the earliest possible date but no later than their planned completion dates.

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 States Parties which have not fully implemented their Article VII obligations to continue their efforts to establish a National Authority, as well as legislation that covers all key areas of the Convention.

Australia maintains its commitment to ensure the continued success of the OPCW beyond the destruction of all chemical weapons, so that it in conjunction with States Parties can meet the non-proliferation challenges now and into the future and that chemical weapons will never be used again. Australia unreservedly joins with other countries that view with abhorrence and condemnation the possible use of chemical weapons by anyone, including by States not yet party to the Convention.

The 3rd Special Session of the Conference to Review the Operation of the Convention that will take place in April next year will be an important opportunity to recalibrate and redouble our efforts.

Mr Chairman

Australia values the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC) which underpins the international consensus against biological weapons and supports international efforts to promote peaceful use of the life sciences. As life science continue to develop rapidly, so does the contemporary relevance of the BWC.

Indeed, the consensus outcome of the Seventh BWC Review Conference in December last year reaffirmed the importance of the instrument in multilateral non-proliferation and disarmament architecture.

The new intersessional process agreed at that Conference now provides States Parties the opportunity over the coming years to address in a sustained manner national implementation, developments in the fields of science and technology and international cooperation and assistance. We need to use that opportunity. We need to use the intersessional period to develop a practical vision for the future of this Convention. And we need to ensure that the Convention is keeping up with the developments in the life sciences, for which industry and academe are increasingly the primary drivers.
We also need to work harder to ensure that all States become States Parties of the Convention – sharing the responsibilities, but also sharing the benefits of this unique Conventions which joins security and public health issues.

Regional exchanges can also complement and reinforce our multilateral efforts in Geneva. And Australia continues to play an active role in this regard. For example, just last month, the Philippines, the United States and Australia co-chaired an ASEAN Regional Forum workshop in Manila on preparedness and response to a biological event. By bringing together representatives of the health, emergency management, law enforcement and security sectors of ARF participating countries, the workshop underlined the value of practical regional work to ensure the better implementation of the Convention.

Mr Chairman

Australia’s commitment to bolstering non-proliferation is reflected in its active support for a range of additional measures – for example the international arrangements for establishing global best practice controls on the export of WMD relevant items and the means ballistic missile technologies. We are also active in fostering capabilities to implement controls on the export, import and transit and transhipment of sensitive goods and technologies.

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.

Our activity in the year ahead will see the ongoing process of updating and refining the control standards and the broadest possible program of outreach. And the good news is that an increasing number of countries are drawing on the work of the Australia Group to strengthen their national control systems and consequently global standards are steadily improving.

However, challenges remain. Scientific developments and the availability of increasingly sophisticated production techniques offer proliferators new options. At the same time the increasingly wide availability of sophisticated goods combined with 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.

I thank you, Mr Chairman.