UNGA68: First Committee

Explanation of Vote on L.2, “The Risk of Nuclear Proliferation in the Middle East”

Delivered by Ambassador Peter Woolcott, Australian Permanent Representative to the United Nations, Geneva, and Ambassador for Disarmament

31 October 2013

Mr Chairman,

I take the floor to explain my delegation’s vote on resolution L.2.

Mr Chairman,

Australia is committed to preventing the spread of nuclear weapons and to the goal of a world free of nuclear weapons. As a strong supporter of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, we will continue to promote these objectives in all relevant international fora.

Our strong advocacy for universalisation of the NPT and for universal application of International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) safeguards, including the Additional Protocol, is a matter of record.

Australia has long been a supporter of effectively verifiable nuclear-weapon-free zones freely arrived at by member states, and we have consistently supported the UN General Assembly resolution calling for the establishment of a nuclear weapons free zone in the Middle East.

Australia places the greatest importance on implementation of the consensus outcome of the 2010 NPT Review Conference and supports the practical steps endorsed by the Review Conference toward the convening of a Conference on the establishment of a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction and their delivery systems.

Australia has clearly expressed our support for the efforts made by UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon, UN High Representative for Disarmament Affairs Angela Kane, Ambassador Jaako Laajava and the depositary states, in consultation with the states of the Middle East region, for the convening of that Conference without delay.

Australia’s view has been consistent for a long time: that all states in the region should adhere to the NPT and that their nuclear facilities should therefore be subject to IAEA inspection.

However, a resolution entitled “The risk of nuclear proliferation in the Middle East” which only refers to one country and makes no reference to current deepening nuclear proliferation risks elsewhere in the Middle East region is in our view unbalanced and we therefore again must regrettably abstain.