Mr Chairman

I congratulate you on your election as Chair of the First Committee during its 72\textsuperscript{nd} session. You can be assured of my delegation’s strong support for your work.

As the Committee begins its formal proceedings it is worth reflecting on what we are trying to achieve in this forum. Our shared goal is for a world where people can live in peace, security and prosperity.

The threats to this objective loom large.

North Korea’s illegal nuclear and ballistic missile development programs pose a grave and increasing threat to global security. They directly challenge both the established disarmament and non-proliferation architecture and the authority of the UN Security Council. Conflicts and rising tensions in other parts of the world, including the Middle East, and other challenges, such as the scourge of terrorism, are also fuelling global insecurity.

Concurrently, we risk growing multilateral polarisation borne of impatience with the pace of disarmament, and disagreement over how best to achieve a world free of nuclear weapons.
Now as much as ever we must remain committed to a cooperative and collaborative approach to this task.

We must find practical ways to enhance security and deter behaviour like that of North Korea.

Mr Chairman

The JCPOA is an historic agreement that Australia supports. We would be concerned at any breakdown of the mechanism, especially in the absence of any viable alternative.

Australia continues to encourage Iran and all parties to the JCPOA to carry on implementing and abiding by its terms.

Australia firmly believes that, in order to advance the course of nuclear disarmament and enhance security, we must continue to strongly support the NPT as the cornerstone of the international community’s long-term disarmament efforts. We share the goal of a world without nuclear weapons but simply declaring them unlawful without buy-in from possessor states will not bring us closer to this end.

We must renew our pursuit of the essential building blocks of nuclear disarmament, including the entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), the negotiation of a legally binding and effectively verifiable ban on the production of fissile material and progressing nuclear verification including through the upcoming Group of Government Experts’ meeting which we hope to join.

This last year has seen the 30th anniversary of the entry into force of the South Pacific Nuclear Weapons Free Zone – the Treaty of Rarotonga. We encourage other collaborative regional disarmament efforts.

Mr Chairman

Australia continues to give high priority to advancing conventional disarmament.

We reaffirm our commitment to the universalisation and implementation of the Arms Trade Treaty, particularly in our Asia-
Pacific Region. The ATT has a critical role to play in supporting key national security interests. It addresses a range of global challenges, from prevention of conflict and atrocities to supporting the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. We would like to welcome you all to our launch event on 20 October for the publication on the Broader Benefits of the ATT.

Australia remains concerned about the long-lasting impacts resulting from the use of landmines, cluster munitions and Improvised Explosive Devices (IED).

We encourage states to take all measures to reduce the suffering caused by landmines and cluster munitions weapons as well as the broader problem of explosive remnants of war, which remain long after conflicts cease, and to ensure sustainable support for the victims of these weapons. We hope that Member States will support this year’s IED resolution put forward by Afghanistan, Australia and France.

Mr Chairman

To date, nearly five million people have been liberated from ISIL in Syria and Iraq. But more needs to be done to defeat ISIL and terrorism more broadly.

A multi-faceted approach is required, which starts by addressing the drivers of violent extremism.

Australia supports the newly established UN Office of Counter-Terrorism and will work with it to encourage a balanced implementation of the Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy.

Australia remains deeply concerned at the re-emergence of the use of chemical weapons, particularly as we commemorate the 20th anniversary of the entry into force of the Chemical Weapons Convention and the formation of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons.

We call on the international community to uphold the well-established norm against the use of such weapons, and to demonstrate its resolve to hold perpetrators accountable, notably in Syria.
While Australia regretted the absence of a consensus outcome at the 2016 Biological Weapons Convention (BWC) Review Conference, we remain committed to strengthening the treaty.

Mr Chairman

Australia welcomes continued and growing attention on space and cyber security.

The fiftieth anniversary of Outer Space Treaty in 2017 presents an opportunity to reflect on the importance of space to our prosperity and development. In this anniversary year, Australia has announced its commitment to launching a dedicated space agency to ensure we have a long-term strategic plan for our space activities.

Australia confirms our commitment to promoting an international stability framework for cyberspace based on the application of existing international law, agreed voluntary norms of responsible state behaviour and confidence building measures.

Australia regrets the 2016-17 United Nations Group of Governmental Experts on Cyber (UNGGE) could not agree a consensus report.

We will continue to promote the common understandings in the UNGGE’s previous reports, guided by our inaugural International Cyber Engagement Strategy.

Mr Chairman

While the UN disarmament machinery has struggled over the years, we were heartened by this year’s consensus outcome of the UN Disarmament Commission – breaking a near two-decade long impasse. This, together with the consensus outcome of the SSOD IV open-ended working group, gives us real hope that member states can rally together and deliver tangible outcomes in our shared interests.

Australia remains committed to playing its part and is determined to work constructively and collaboratively to achieve our shared goal of enhancing global security and stability through the work of this important committee.