Second Preparatory Committee 
for the 2005 NPT Review Conference 
Safety and Security of Peaceful Nuclear Programs 

Statement by 
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Australian Delegation 

Geneva, Wednesday 7 May 2003 
(Please check against delivery)
Mr Chairman

Access to nuclear technology for peaceful purposes is one of the central benefits of the NPT and one to which Australia attaches considerable importance. But there is a clear relationship between the non-proliferation objectives in Articles I, II and III and the peaceful uses objectives in Article IV of the Treaty. In particular, international trade and cooperation in nuclear materials and technology for peaceful purposes rely on IAEA safeguards and nuclear export controls to provide the necessary assurance that these activities do not contribute to proliferation. Another key factor in the successful development of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes is adherence to internationally accepted standards of nuclear safety.

Mr Chairman

Nuclear energy and nuclear applications in health, agriculture and industry have been key drivers of development, improving global living standards. Australia’s adherence to Article IV is demonstrated through a number of concrete measures and activities.

Australia considers the IAEA's Technical Cooperation Fund is a very important part of the nuclear non-proliferation system. The Agency’s work has enabled numerous countries to derive the benefits of nuclear technology in a wide range of areas, from food and agriculture and human health to industry and resource management. Australia remains committed to the IAEA’s technical cooperation (TC) program and our pledge to the Fund, currently over 90% of our target rate of attainment, is paid in full each year, in keeping with our commitment to the NPT. At the same time, we continue to support efforts to make technology transfer and technical cooperation more effective, whether on a multilateral, regional or bilateral level. We support the ongoing reform to the TC program, such as the concepts of Model Projects, Country Programme Frameworks and Thematic Planning, to ensure that financial resources are expended wisely and programs managed within budget.

In line with our support for active technical cooperation, Australia participates in and encourages a vibrant exchange of information and experts, particularly within the Asia-Pacific region. Australia contributed significant extrabudgetary funding to the Regional Cooperative Agreement for Research, Development and Training Related to Nuclear Science and Technology (RCA). As part of our bilateral cooperation agreements and our participation in IAEA projects, Australia’s nuclear-related agencies provide experts to the IAEA and participate in meetings with regional counterparts.

Australia is a staunch supporter of the international legal framework which underpins the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. Australia has been an active participant in both reviews of the Convention on Nuclear Safety and we believe that the Review Meetings stimulated constructive discussion on progress and shortcomings in national regulatory frameworks and nuclear safety programs. We urge all those who are operating, constructing or planning nuclear power reactors, and who have not yet adhered to the Convention, to do so.

Australia also urges all NPT States Parties to recommit themselves to the highest practicable standards in the safe handling and disposition of radioactive waste. We have signed the Joint Convention on the Safety of Spent Fuel Management and the Safety of
Radioactive Waste Management. Following Parliamentary approval in March, the deposit of Australia's instrument of ratification is now imminent. Given the heightened international concerns about terrorism involving radiological materials, effective spent fuel and waste management practices are even more important and we urge States yet to do so to adhere to the Convention as soon as possible.

Australia has also been an active participant at the recent IAEA International Conference on the Security of Radioactive Sources and will chair the forthcoming IAEA Conference on the Safety of Transport of Radioactive Material in July.

Preventing illicit trafficking in nuclear materials is of course a priority task for the international community. Australia holds the view that, although the secure custody of nuclear materials is primarily a State responsibility, the IAEA is able to make a major contribution by coordinating the development of national systems for nuclear accountancy and control, and physical protection. Such an essentially preventive role is an integral part of the Agency's existing mandate.

Mr Chairman

Work to strengthen the international legal and institutional framework within which nuclear cooperation and commerce primarily focuses - quite rightly - on the interests of countries actively engaged in nuclear research or nuclear power generation. But we must not forget the interests other countries have in ensuring that peaceful nuclear activities are carried out in accordance with the highest international standards of safety and security.

In Australia's immediate region, South Pacific countries are concerned about the maritime transfer of nuclear materials through their region. States shipping radioactive material can point both to the shipment of nuclear material around the world without incident over the last 30 plus years, and the minimal risk of actual damage in the unlikely event of an accident. Nevertheless, Pacific Islands Forum member countries expect shipping states to ensure the safety of such shipments.

As a member of the Pacific Islands Forum, Australia has encouraged, and participated in, discussions between Forum members and States involved in the shipment of nuclear material through the region to explore ways to address particular concerns of regional States with regard to existing international arrangements. The last meeting of Forum members and shipping states in February viewed as worthy of further consideration a proposal for discussions on possible compensation for incidents without the release of radioactivity where there is an established link between the incident and economic loss. There now may be an opportunity to move closer to a resolution of the issue through the discussions at the IAEA Transport Conference in Vienna in July and the post-Pacific Islands Forum dialogue in Auckland in August.

Mr Chairman

Australia is proud of its contribution to the peaceful application of nuclear energy made possible by the assurance the NPT provides. Australia looks forward, in this PrepCom, to the emergence of additional ideas to further improve cooperation in this area.

Thank you Mr Chairman