Third Preparatory Committee for the 2005 NPT Review Conference

Statement on Cluster Issues

delivered by

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(Check against delivery)

Mr Chairman,

Continued steady progress on nuclear disarmament is central to preserving the political strength and vitality of the Treaty, and remains a key Australian policy objective. While acknowledging the progress made on nuclear disarmament Australia renews its expectation of further nuclear disarmament steps by the nuclear weapon states. We remain firmly committed to practical progress on nuclear disarmament, this being the objective of the 13 disarmament steps from the 2000 NPT Review Conference.

Australia welcomes entry into force of the Moscow Treaty on June 1, 2003. We hope the United States and Russia will continue to pursue progressive reductions to strategic and non-strategic nuclear weapons in both deployed and reserve holdings. Australia also welcomes the nuclear disarmament steps taken by the United Kingdom and France.

The debate on nuclear disarmament will be most productive if it is well informed. Australia appreciates the reports, both written and oral, to the PrepCom from the nuclear weapon states. We look to the nuclear weapon states to be as transparent as possible about their nuclear weapons policies and disarmament actions.

Mr Chairman,

While the nuclear weapon states continue to possess nuclear weapons they have a responsibility to ensure their nuclear weapons policies do not detract from the global non-proliferation norm. Were this to occur the Treaty's basic foundation could be eroded.
We recall as a key outcome from the 2006 Review Conference the principle of irreversibility should apply to nuclear disarmament. This is an issue all nuclear weapon states should address in providing information on Article VI commitments. As with reductions in nuclear weapons we recognise there has been progress on irreversibility including the substantial amounts of excess fissile material to be disposed of so that it is no longer usable in nuclear weapons. We also welcome the work being done by the United Kingdom on verifying the reduction and elimination of nuclear weapons. Effective verification will be central to irreversible nuclear disarmament.

Mr Chairman

All States Parties, including the non-nuclear weapons states, must demonstrate their commitment to practical steps that can facilitate nuclear disarmament. Australia, like many other delegations, places particular importance on entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). We are convinced CTBT entry into force would serve the interests of all NPT parties, non-nuclear and nuclear weapon state alike. Nor should we lose sight of the fact that already the CTBT’s International Monitoring System is delivering real security benefits. We look to the PrepCom to urge those countries yet to sign or ratify the CTBT to do so as quickly as possible. Until the CTBT enters into force, existing moratoriums on nuclear testing must be maintained, and strong support for the development of the International Monitoring System sustained.

Capping the amount of fissile material available for nuclear weapons use is an essential step towards irreversible nuclear disarmament and we call for commencement of negotiations for the fissile material cut-off treaty. Pending the FMCT, we urge relevant states to consider voluntary transparency and confidence building measures regarding fissile material holdings and production. We welcome the moratorium by some nuclear weapon states on production of fissile material for nuclear weapons. Pending negotiation of the FMCT, we hope China will join the other nuclear weapon states in this moratorium, and also call on the nuclear capable states outside the NPT to join this moratorium.

Nuclear weapon free zones make a significant contribution to nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament. Australia also places great importance on nuclear weapon free zones as a vehicle for providing binding negative security assurances to non-nuclear weapon states. Over the past decade nuclear weapon state signature of the protocols to nuclear weapon free zone has increased the number of non-nuclear weapon states benefiting from legally-binding negative security assurances. Where nuclear weapon states are yet to sign or ratify zone Protocols we encourage continuation of discussions aimed at resolving remaining issues to enable this to happen.

Mr Chairman

The NPT remains the only global treaty dedicated to stopping the spread of nuclear weapons and their eventual elimination. But we must recognise that nuclear disarmament cannot be considered in isolation from other aspects of the Treaty or indeed from the wider international security environment. All of us committed to nuclear disarmament have strong and direct interests in maintaining the effectiveness of all aspects of the Treaty and working for a stable and secure international environment.