UNITED NATIONS THIRD PREPARATORY COMMITTEE
FOR THE 2005 NPT REVIEW CONFERENCE

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Regional issues

Statement by

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(Check against delivery)

Mr Chairman

This past year has seen continuance of challenges to the NPT from various regions. Universality remains crucial to full achievement of the Treaty's goals. We again call upon the three States never to have joined the NPT - India, Israel and Pakistan - to accede to the Treaty as non-nuclear weapon states. In the meantime these States have a responsibility to support the nuclear non-proliferation norm, particularly by ensuring strict domestic controls on their nuclear materials, equipment, technology and knowledge.

Australia continues to regard North Korea's nuclear weapons program as a grave threat to regional and global security. North Korea's non-compliance with its NPT obligations, announced withdrawal from the NPT and operation of an unsafeguarded nuclear program, including claimed reprocessing, challenges directly the interests of all NPT parties. The revelations about Khan proliferation network cooperation with North Korea on centrifuge enrichment further underline the need for the DPRK to address international concerns over its highly enriched uranium program. NPT parties must be united in calling for North Korea to completely, verifiably and irreversibly dismantle its nuclear weapons program. The PrepCom should also call upon North Korea to reverse its announced withdrawal from the NPT and to fulfil all NPT obligations, particularly acceptance of safeguards.
While as yet there has been little concrete progress Australia welcomes development of a process for resolving the North Korea nuclear issue. We regard the six-party talks as the most viable and appropriate mechanism for finding a peaceful and lasting resolution to the DPRK nuclear issue. Australia appreciates China’s central role in taking the six-party process forward.

Before addressing Middle East NPT issues I would like to record Australia’s full support for the Middle East peace process and for international efforts to end the cycle of violence.

The difficult security issues in the Middle East will be made worse by countries in the region developing nuclear weapons or other weapons of mass destruction. Proliferation of such weapons, or programs for their acquisition, stresses to fuel proliferation pressures in the region, damaging the security situation and risking unforeseeable consequences. Australia has consistently urged Middle East countries yet to join the NPT, CTBT, CWC and the BWC to do so without delay. We also encourage Middle East countries to subscribe to The Hague Code of Conduct Against Ballistic Missile Proliferation. Australia’s report on steps taken to promote the achievement of a Middle East arms free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction has been circulated as a Conference document.

Iran is still far from resolving international concerns about its nuclear program. IAEA reports have, since the last PrepCom, brought to light repeated and serious failures by Iran to comply with its safeguards obligations. The Agency has documented efforts by Iran to conceal material, facilities and activities that it was obliged to declare. Outstanding questions remain about aspects of Iran’s nuclear program, including activities related to uranium enrichment. We look to the PrepCom to make clear its expectation that Iran urgently cooperate fully with the IAEA to resolve outstanding questions, and that states, entities and persons which have supplied Iran’s nuclear program also cooperate fully with the IAEA.

Australia recognises Iran has taken some welcome positive steps to improve transparency, in particular Iran’s signature of the Additional Protocol (AP) and its undertaking to implement the AP in full. At Iran’s invitation an Australian expert recently visited Tehran to provide training on AP implementation. The PrepCom should call for Iran’s prompt ratification of the AP and for Iran to ensure its AP declaration is complete.

Libya’s historic decision in December 2003 to eliminate verifiably all materials, equipment and programs leading to the production of nuclear weapons, should be welcomed by the PrepCom. Libya’s actions stand as a prominent example of the benefits available to States which embrace transparency, and commit to compliance with the highest nuclear non-proliferation standards. The Australian delegation expresses its appreciation to the United Kingdom and United States for working with Libya to achieve this outcome, and also acknowledges the IAEA’s pivotal role in verifying Libya’s decision. At the same time, it should be a matter of concern to the PrepCom that Libya was able covertly to acquire sensitive nuclear technology while a party to the NPT and subject to safeguards. Libya’s past non-compliance with its safeguards obligations is a serious matter—one that has appropriately been reported to the UN Security Council. It
further highlights the need to strengthen the IAEA safeguards system through universal application of the Additional Protocol.

The Khan proliferation network is a common factor in countries of proliferation concern, having provided nuclear materials and technology to North Korea, Iran, and Libya. The PrepCom should register its deep concern at the existence of this network and underscore the vital importance of relevant states cooperating fully to ensure the Khan network is fully dismantled and never operates again.

Mr Chairman

We welcome the reduction in tensions between India and Pakistan and the steps the two are taking towards resolving the issues that divide them. Nevertheless, the situation continues to illustrate the dangers of nuclear proliferation. We hope that India and Pakistan will come to accept that nuclear weapons have diminished, not added, to their security and will turn away from these weapons. Australia welcomes the nuclear testing moratorium being observed by India and Pakistan and underlines the importance of these being maintained. We urge both countries to hasten building national consensus in their respective countries in support of CTBT signature and ratification. As noted earlier in this statement, pending their joining of the NPT we underline the importance of India and Pakistan applying effective nuclear export controls and stand ready to assist both countries in this regard.

Mr Chairman

Significant regional challenges for the NPT remain. But developments over the past year show progress in addressing these challenges is possible if the international community responds firmly and with unified purpose.