AUSTRALIA

Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons

Second Session of the Preparatory Committee

Cluster II: Specific Issues

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Mr Chairman

A driving factor in Australia’s decision to join the NPT, as for many other parties, was regional security and the positive role the NPT could play in this area.

Today, the NPT remains as vital to ensuring regional security as it is to safeguarding global security.

With this in mind, I will focus on two regions: the Asia-Pacific and the Middle East.

Mr Chairman

A key non-proliferation objective for Australia has been to prevent proliferation of nuclear weapons in the Asia Pacific region.

The DPRK’s nuclear weapons program is a serious challenge to the nuclear non-proliferation regime and to the peace, stability and security of the Asia Pacific region and beyond.

Australia and regional countries, in fora such as the ASEAN Regional Forum and East Asian Summit, have reaffirmed the critical importance of the de-nuclearisation of the Korean Peninsula, the need for North Korea to denuclearise in a verifiable manner, refrain from actions that threaten regional and international security and re-commit to the NPT.

There has been some welcome progress made on disarmament in the DPRK during 2007, including the shutdown and substantial disablement of the Yongbyon nuclear facilities.

But we are disappointed that the DPRK has not honoured its commitment to provide a complete and correct declaration of all of its nuclear programs by 31 December 2007. That declaration will be both an important demonstration of the DPRK’s sincerity and a crucial basis for the next phase of its denuclearisation. We urge the DPRK to fulfil this commitment without further delay.

Full implementation of its Six-Party commitments offers the DPRK an historic opportunity to consolidate its future. But the international community needs to be confident that the DPRK will fulfil its side of the bargain.

Mr Chairman

Australia supports fully the Middle East peace process and urges all parties to remain committed to a solution two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict based on Israel’s right to live in peace with secure borders and the legitimate aspirations of Palestinian people for a state of their own.

The difficult security issues in the Middle East will only be made worse by countries there developing nuclear weapons or other weapons of mass destruction.

Possession of such weapons, or programs for their acquisition, fuels proliferation, damages regional security and risks unforeseen consequences.

Australia supports fully the establishment of an effectively verifiable Middle East zone free of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery and has joined consensus on the UN General Assembly resolution on this issue.

Australia contributes to this goal through its efforts to achieve universal membership of the NPT and other WMD and missile non-proliferation treaties and codes.
Membership of and adherence to these measures by the countries of the Middle East, even if undertaken progressively, would be a step towards a WMD-free Middle East.

Australia will give careful consideration to the working papers on this most important issue that have been submitted by Egypt and others.

Mr Chairman

Australia shares the concerns of States Parties about Iran’s failure to provide necessary confidence that its nuclear activities are purely for peaceful purposes.

Iran’s nuclear program and defiance of the international community’s reasonable expectations that it comply with the International Atomic Energy Agency and UN Security Council continue to undermine the non-proliferation regime.

Although there has been some welcome progress, Iran has yet to cooperate fully with the IAEA to resolve the outstanding questions related to its nearly twenty year period of undisclosed nuclear activity.

Nor has Iran provided the IAEA with the necessary transparency to confirm that Iran’s nuclear program has always been and is peaceful in nature.

These actions are not those of a state seeking to remove all doubts about the peaceful intent of its nuclear program.

NPT parties should make clear their expectation that Iran provide full cooperation to the IAEA in resolving outstanding questions, including access rights, and demonstrate transparency by ratifying the Additional Protocol.

Australia will continue to support efforts by the international community to engage Iran on a comprehensive long term solution and to promote wide-ranging cooperation with Iran but only if Iran complies with its international obligations and cooperates with the international community.

Mr Chairman

Nuclear weapon free zones can clearly play an important role in preventing proliferation consistent with NPT obligations. They also have an important role as a vehicle for the nuclear weapon states to provide binding negative security assurances to non-nuclear weapon states in those zones. In our nuclear disarmament statement we referred to the South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone which bans the manufacturing, stationing, possession and testing of nuclear weapons in this zone. Australia hopes that the South Pacific Nuclear Weapons Free Zone can prove a positive inspiration for other regions.

Australia welcomes continued efforts among African states to bring into force the Treaty of Pelindaba and encourages practical cooperation among the existing nuclear weapons free zones in the Southern Hemisphere.

And we encourage members of all zones to work with each other and the nuclear weapon states to bring these arrangements into full effect.

Mr Chairman
States that are still to join the treaty have a responsibility to support the nuclear non-proliferation norm, particularly by ensuring strict domestic controls on their nuclear materials, equipment, technology and knowledge.

Nonetheless, universality remains essential to full realisation of the treaty’s goals and should remain the highest priority.

Australia therefore again calls upon all those States that have not yet joined the NPT to accede to it as non-nuclear weapon states as soon as possible.

Mr Chairman

Australia acknowledges the difficulty of achieving disarmament and non-proliferation goals without concurrent efforts to address the underlying political tensions that drive regional conflicts. Australia urges all member states to work for secure regional political environments in which states do not mistakenly believe they need to possess nuclear weapons to guarantee their security.