Third Preparatory Committee for the 2010 Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conference

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Cluster One Issues

Statement by Valerie Grey
Counsellor and Deputy Permanent Representative of Australia to the Conference on Disarmament

(Check against delivery)

Mr Chairman

On the 9th of June 2008, the Australian Prime Minister, Mr Rudd, announced the establishment of an International Commission on Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament to reinvigorate global non-proliferation and disarmament efforts and to help shape a global consensus on the goal of a nuclear weapon-free world in the lead up to the 2010 NPT Review Conference and beyond. Some of you may have attended the briefing yesterday by the Commission’s co-chairs, former Australian Foreign Minister Gareth Evans and former Japanese Foreign Minister Yoriko Kawaguchi on its work to date.

By the 9th of June 2008 we had seen some significant statements from influential former politicians and an upswing in civil society engagement on nuclear issues. But many states were concerned whether there would be sufficient political will to achieve meaningful consensus outcomes in 2010. The Commission’s work seemed daunting but, because of that, all the more necessary.

Today, we are experiencing the highest level of political will on nuclear disarmament in decades, due to the outstanding leadership of President Obama and President Medvedev. We also welcome UK Prime Minister Brown’s commitment to a nuclear weapon-free world and the eleven benchmarks for global nuclear disarmament outlined by Japanese Foreign Minister Nakasone.
The prospects for significant progress on Article VI at the 2010 Review Conference are far better than we could have imagined at the 2005 Review Conference or even when the Commission was announced last June. The Commission still has to grapple with complex and difficult issues involving fundamental national security interests. But it is doing so in a vastly more enabling environment.

Mr Chairman,

We must all seize this moment. We must ensure that the Review Conference provides a way forward on nuclear disarmament.

First, nuclear weapon states should advise the Conference of nuclear reductions undertaken by that time and further planned cuts in all categories of nuclear weapons – including those in any successor to START. They should also advise states parties on what they have done to reduce the role of nuclear weapons in their security policies, to reduce the operational status of these weapons and to de-target their nuclear armed missiles and increase the time required for their launch.

Transparent statements by all five nuclear weapon states would provide an important level of confidence at the Review Conference.

Second, all states, but particularly the nuclear weapon states, should report on what they have done to promote the entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty. It would give a tremendous boost to the Review Conference if more Annex II states, particularly, nuclear weapon states, ratified or acceded to the Treaty by 2010. It would give an even greater boost if the CTBT had entered into force, or was soon to do so.

Third, all states should support the negotiation of a Fissile Material Cut-Off Treaty on the basis of the Shannon mandate, i.e. with verification provisions and without prejudice on negotiations. With the other five Presidents of the Conference on Disarmament this year, Australia is working hard to ensure the CD takes the decision to negotiate a FMCT this year, in the context of a balanced program of work. If the decision is taken in 2009, negotiations can be well underway by the time of the Review Conference, providing another boost.

Fourth, states parties, particularly the nuclear weapon states, should set out what they have done, are continuing to do or are committed to do to implement the 13 steps. We accept that a few of these steps – those relating to now the now defunct START II and III – may have been overtaken by developments but many remain relevant and vitally necessary and have not yet been implemented – including the three issues referred to a few moments ago. Reporting on their implementation will provide confidence to states parties about nuclear weapon states' commitments to their undertakings at past Review Conferences. In so doing it will also provide an essential level of assurance about their commitment to implement any new actions agreed to in 2010.

Fifth, we think it would be useful for the Conference also to agree on a clear blueprint for further action on nuclear disarmament. In the lead up to the Review Conference, we will look to the Commission, to other forums and to states parties to provide further ambitious but practical and realistic suggestions.
Finally, Australia would also like to see the Review Conference reaffirm the ultimate goal of the complete elimination of nuclear weapons. Much has been said about getting to zero and the steps which could be taken along the way. The eventual abolition of nuclear weapons may require, at an appropriate time, complementary legal frameworks, including a possible nuclear weapons convention. Australia supports the on-going efforts to explore the necessary political conditions for reaching a world without nuclear weapons.

Mr Chairman

Australia like other NPT parties continues to call on India, Pakistan and Israel to join the NPT as non-nuclear weapon states. Meantime, we encourage these states to take their share of the responsibility for nuclear disarmament, including through CTBT ratification and agreement to negotiate a verifiable FMCT. Discussion of the further extension of non-proliferation disciplines to these states, to the maximum extent possible, could be a useful issue for deliberation at the Review Conference.

Mr Chairman

Serious progress towards nuclear disarmament and the goal of a nuclear weapon free world also requires serious commitments by non-nuclear weapon states not to acquire or develop nuclear weapons and to accept stringent international safeguards on their nuclear facilities. This is one of the fundamental bargains in the NPT. It provides an important collective security benefit to all parties – which the Review Conference should reaffirm.

While most NPT parties, like Australia, fully accept and implement their NPT safeguards and non-proliferation obligations, the unwillingness of some fully to cooperate with the IAEA and/or the UN Security Council raises serious concerns about the direction of their nuclear programs.

Iran’s nuclear program and defiance of the international community’s reasonable expectations that it fully comply with the IAEA and UN Security Council continues to undermine the non-proliferation regime and destabilise its region. NPT parties should make clear at this precom and, if still necessary, at the Review Conference, their expectation that Iran fully cooperate with the IAEA to resolve outstanding questions, including access rights.

Australia shares the international community’s concerns that Syria is not cooperating with the IAEA’s investigation to determine the nature of Syrian activities at the suspected covert nuclear site at Al Kibar. It is imperative that Syria provides the IAEA further access to the site, and the debris cleared from the site, as well as access to the three other locations identified as relevant to the IAEA’s investigations. We hope this will not be an issue for the Review Conference.

Australia is deeply disturbed by North Korea’s nuclear test, its decision to withdraw from the Six Party Talks, to cease cooperation with the IAEA and its announced intention to resume activities at its nuclear facilities in Yongbyon. We urge North Korea to reconsider these decisions to return to compliance with UN Security Council resolutions and its obligations under the NPT, and to fulfil the commitments it has made in the Talks. We hope these issues can be resolved by the time of the Review Conference.
Mr Chairman,

Australia is firmly committed to realising a world free from nuclear weapons and to supporting multilateral efforts to strengthen the environment for nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation both in the Asia Pacific region and globally.

We are doing so by establishing the International Commission on Nuclear Non-proliferation and Disarmament, as one of the six 2009 presidents of the Conference on Disarmament, as a Governor on the Board of the International Atomic Energy Agency, as the 2009 President of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organisation and by working actively with regional and global partners.

I thank you.