Mr Chairman,

Over the past year, Australia has continued its concerted efforts to deliver on its long standing commitment to nuclear disarmament. The crucial way forward is for us all to work to a successful outcome for the 2015 NPT Review Conference.

Australia is a member of the twelve-nation Non-Proliferation and Disarmament Initiative (NPDI) which is doing just that, through its emphasis on comprehensive implementation of the 2010 NPT Review Conference Action Plan. Through the NPDI, Australia has continued to urge nuclear-weapon States (NWS) to pursue nuclear disarmament in good faith. This cross-regional and diverse group of countries share in common a commitment to the NPT and to the goal of total elimination of nuclear weapons. At the most recent Ministerial Meeting of the NPDI, held in Hiroshima last month, we reaffirmed that commitment and to actively contribute to the 2015 NPT review process.

The building blocks of that process are well known to everyone here today. These include increased transparency to build confidence and support further disarmament; the entry into force of the CTBT; the start of negotiations on, and earliest conclusion of, a FMCT; reduction in the operational status of nuclear weapons systems; diminishing the role of nuclear weapons in security policies; and reduction in the number of non-strategic nuclear weapons. These building blocks help create an environment where countries, including the NWS and those who rely on their nuclear umbrella, believe themselves to be more secure without nuclear weapons than with them.

And, of course, disarmament and non-proliferation are pillars one and two of the NPT, not silos one and two. The building blocks of a non-discriminatory, global and effective non-proliferation regime are also essential if we are to attain the goal of eliminating nuclear weapons.
Mr Chairman,

Australia welcomes the renewed global focus on the humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons. It underpins all the work of the NPDI, and indeed, the very existence of the NPT. But we see no short cuts to global disarmament. We must, however, do better. The 2010 NPT Action Plan already includes most of the steps required to advance the disarmament and non-proliferation objectives encapsulated in the NPT. We must show greater global will, and work in concert, to implement it fully and without delay. The catastrophic humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons use demands it.

Mr Chairman,

Australia welcomes the ongoing implementation of New START and hopes that the treaty arrangements can remain quarantined from the current tensions over the situation in Ukraine. Encouraged by US President Obama’s proposal in his speech in Berlin in June 2013, the NPDI urges the US and Russia to negotiate further and deeper cuts.

Delivering on the three principles of nuclear disarmament will be a key requirement if we want a successful 2015 NPT Review Conference, noting that the principle of transparency underpins those of verification and irreversibility.

In 2012, the NPDI submitted a working paper on transparency which contained a draft standard nuclear disarmament reporting form so that the NWS could have a template with which to implement Action 21. The NPDI called on the NWS to agree on a standard reporting form and to make regular reports on their nuclear disarmament activities.

At this PrepCom the P5 have for the first time presented reports on their steps to meet their disarmament, non-proliferation and peaceful uses obligations as agreed in the 2010 NPT Action Plan. To varying degrees these reports have made public more information about nuclear arsenals, policies and plans to reduce stockpiles of warheads.

Australia welcomes the P5 reports as a useful first step by the NWS towards meeting their reporting obligations. We expect the NWS will continue to build on their reports, recognising that increased transparency is fundamental to building trust and confidence - which are the key political ingredients for making decisions to reduce the size of nuclear arsenals.

The NPDI reporting template which was passed to the NWS, remains our preferred level of detail. But the important thing is that the NWS now appear to be on the pathway to greater transparency and this is something we will continue to push for.

In this regard we encourage all States to complete and present their annual national reporting plans – Australia has submitted its reporting plan against the 64 points of the 2010 Action Plan, and we expect this document to be up on the Paper Smart portal soon.

Australia is also pleased to submit to this Preparatory Committee a working paper on de-alerting on behalf of the NPDI. The call to de-alert is included in both the 2000 Review Conference on the 13 practical steps towards nuclear disarmament and in the action plan [Action 5(e) and 5(f)] adopted at the 2010 Review Conference. The paper highlights the
fact that de-alerting can also provide a boost to disarmament efforts and help de-emphasise the role of nuclear weapons. The NPDI urges all NWS to take concrete and meaningful steps to reduce the operational readiness of nuclear weapons systems, consistent with their commitments under Actions 5(e) and 5(f), and to provide an update to NPT States Parties.

Mr Chairman,

The Foreign Minister of Australia, Julie Bishop, spoke at the Conference on Disarmament (CD) in March 2014 where she called for action to be taken lest that Conference render itself irrelevant. All Parties must agree on a comprehensive and balanced program of work, with the commencement of negotiations on a FMCT the highest priority.

Australia is doing what it can to get the CD to live up to its heritage of contributing to a safer and more peaceful world. We are working actively and constructively within the Informal Working Group, to “adopt and implement a program of work at the earliest possible date in the 2014 session”.

The world’s patience is limited. If the CD remains moribund, it calls into question its role as the single multilateral disarmament negotiations forum. We are an active participant in the Group of Governmental Experts to propose recommendations on aspects of a FMCT which met in its first session in Geneva in March 2014. The first session, under the excellent chairing of Canada, has done good work in zeroing in on the key issues and has conducted its work in an interactive and non-polemical fashion.

Mr Chairman,

Australia welcomes the recent ratification of the CTBT by Guinea-Bissau, Iraq and Niue. We once again call upon all remaining Annex II States to ratify the treaty without delay so that the CTBT can finally enter into force. Entry into force has long been a major Australian and NPDI priority, and it is disappointing that we find ourselves still arguing its merits in 2014.

In preparation for entry into force, Australia continues to work on supporting the verification capacity of the CTBTO’s International Monitoring System (IMS).

Mr Chairman,

We are now at the business end of the Review Cycle and less than a year away from the Review Conference. The 2010 NPT Action Plan is our roadmap and how we mark what is sufficient progress will be the critical question confronting States next year. Clearly progress on the Action Plan has varied across the three pillars and progress on the disarmament pillar has been patchy.

We call on all States and in particular the NWS to meet their undertakings under the Action Plan with renewed vigor. We must escape the cycle of success and failure that has characterized past Review Conferences. The hard, practical and sustained work to bring about a world free of nuclear weapons is still in front of us.