Australia

Improving the Effectiveness of the Strengthened Review process

Mr Chair

The NPT review process has generally served us well. In Australia’s view it provides a crucial avenue for States Parties to work collectively to strengthen the NPT, despite its imperfections. As with progress in any multilateral context, the most important ingredient will always be “political will”.

Australia is open to considering ideas for re-energising the review process - but we don’t underestimate the difficulty in reaching agreement on any changes and would not want this issue to detract from potential substantive progress.

We do see scope for some improvement so that: the review process better enables substantive outcomes; achieves more transparency and accountability; and is as efficient and effective as we can make it. For example, we share the view of many that there is insufficient connection between the work of the Preparatory Committees and the work of the Review Conference which limits scope to bridge differences between NPT parties in contentious areas.

We support exploring ways to capture progress at each PrepCom and feed it in to the next meeting. In the first instance, we acknowledge and commend the efforts of the Chair of this PrepCom to improve communication among Chairs.

We see value in the early appointment of Preparatory Committee and Review Conference Chairs. We note the usefulness of having Vice Chair Ambassador Bugajski on the Bureau at this PrepCom which will help preparations for the second PrepCom which he will Chair.

We are attracted to the concept of a “rolling” outcomes document. We accept that no consensus has emerged in support of this concept but it is an example of the kind of creative thinking that may result in ideas which do attract consensus and ultimately improve our working methods.
In the meantime, we recognise and encourage the efforts towards close communication and coordination between of the Chair of this PrepCom and the Chair of the 2018 PrepCom.

During the course of this review cycle we should consider ways to discuss practical ideas for improving the review process. Such ideas need not be radical to carry the potential of improving the review process, thereby enhancing the operation of the NPT.

In this regard, giving appropriate attention to reporting and transparency as an integral part of the review process will be important.

Chair

A cross-cutting issue of direct relevance to strengthening the review process is ensuring that we work to increase the effective participation of women in the review process, and across the three pillars of the NPT more broadly. It has been heartening to hear several statements delivered by women delegates but we are still too few. Achieving gender equity in this and other NPT discussions is not just good policy but also has the potential to enhance the capability and effectiveness of NPT processes and their outcomes. Research has shown that more diverse teams are more effective, innovative, take more sustainable decisions and are more effective in resolving impasses. The quality of the NPT review process and the NPT itself can only be strengthened by increasing the diversity of our perspectives, ensuring that we listen carefully to each other's views and look for common ground.

Thank you