Cluster 2 Statement

Mr Chair

Today’s international security environment might look very different had the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) not been concluded.

Preventing proliferation is in the interests of all States. We share the responsibility to protect, preserve and advance the NPT as the cornerstone of the global nuclear non-proliferation regime.

Mr Chair

In 2016, Australia and Myanmar partnered to secure an agreed statement by leaders on the key strategic challenge of nuclear non-proliferation. The East Asia Summit (EAS) Leaders’ Statement on Non-Proliferation reflects a single, united voice from 18 regional leaders reaffirming our region’s commitment to the international non-proliferation regime.

This was an important and timely declaration on a pressing security issue facing the region, made more prescient by the DPRK’s continuing nuclear and missile tests and disregard for regional and global security. The DPRK’s accelerated pursuit of nuclear and ballistic missile capabilities is the NPT community’s most pressing non-proliferation challenge. The DPRK’s actions are a clear breach of multiple UN Security Council Resolutions, threaten international security and stability, and challenge the integrity of the NPT by potentially undermining global non-proliferation architecture. We must work urgently and collaboratively to increase the costs to the DPRK and forge regional and multilateral solutions to enhance security across the Indo-Pacific and globally to deal with this threat. We call upon those with influence on the DPRK to exert such influence and intensify efforts to devise solutions.
Mr Chair

Withdrawal from the NPT carries inherent risks to non-proliferation efforts. We draw your attention to the Vienna Group of Ten’s suggestions on how the NPT review process could discourage withdrawal from the NPT, including suggested principles to govern the exercise of the right of withdrawal under Article X of the Treaty. These principles merit serious consideration in this review cycle as they would strengthen this aspect of the NPT.

Mr Chair

The conclusion of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) is a significant positive non-proliferation achievement since the last review cycle.

The deal is a testament to the efforts of the parties involved and the international community to ensure NPT commitments are respected.

We call on all JCPOA parties to continue to implement faithfully their commitments.

Mr Chair

Australia strongly supports the International Atomic Energy Agency’s (IAEA) critical work on safeguards which ensures confidence in the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. In addition, the IAEA’s work to assist Member States to ensure the highest levels of nuclear safety and security is essential to facilitate the peaceful use of nuclear energy.

The combination of a Comprehensive Safeguards Agreement and Additional Protocol represents the verification standard of the Treaty. Australia calls on all states yet to conclude and implement a Comprehensive Safeguards Agreement and Additional Protocol with the IAEA to do so without delay.

In the interests of upholding and strengthening the safeguards regime, Australia also calls on Syria to remedy its non-compliance with its safeguards obligations.

Mr Chair

We welcome the priority given to the Comprehensive Nuclear Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) through the participation of CTBTO Executive Secretary Lassina Zerbo
whose recent visit to Australia raised awareness about the CTBT’s critical contribution to non-proliferation. The CTBT's International Monitoring System makes an immediate practical contribution, including at several locations in Australia.

Australia urges all countries to sign and ratify the CTBT promptly, in particular the eight remaining Annex 2 states, so that the Treaty can enter into force. Entry into force is important for verification of Treaty obligations.

Mr Chair

Strict export controls and effective implementation of domestic measures are essential to ensure that exports do not contribute to nuclear proliferation.

Australia will continue to play its part by contributing to international counter-proliferation initiatives and by controlling the export of technologies, goods or services which could contribute to nuclear proliferation.

We must work to ensure that export control lists evolve in line with technological advances. We encourage all countries to adhere to the export control guidelines of the Zangger Committee and the Nuclear Suppliers’ Group (NSG) in order to limit the likelihood of transfers contributing to proliferation.

Mr Chair

Nuclear Weapon Free Zones (NWFZs) play an important role in strengthening the non-proliferation and disarmament regime. As a long-standing supporter of NWFZs, Australia encourages all in the region to engage in a spirit of genuine and constructive cooperation with the aim of finding a resolution to the Middle East Weapons of Mass Destruction Free Zone issue.

The NPT has been remarkably successful in preventing the spread of nuclear weapons in all of our security interests. We need to recognise this achievement and do even more to strengthen our will and capacity to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons.