Implementation of article VI of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and paragraph 4 (c) of the 1995 decision on principles and objectives for nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament

Report submitted by Australia

1. The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons underpins the international community’s shared and enduring interests in achieving a world free of nuclear weapons. The Treaty remains essential to international efforts to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons, facilitate access to the peaceful uses of nuclear energy and progress nuclear disarmament. Universality remains a key objective. Australia calls on those States yet to join the Treaty to accede as non-nuclear-weapon States as soon as possible and without preconditions.

2. Australia welcomed the signature on 8 April 2010 by the United States of America and the Russian Federation of the Treaty between the United States of America and the Russian Federation on Measures for the Further Reduction and Limitation of Strategic Offensive Arms. This Treaty provides for substantial reductions in the numbers of nuclear weapons and ballistic missile launchers deployed by the United States and the Russian Federation. Australia also welcomed steps taken unilaterally by France and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to reduce their nuclear arsenals.

3. Without diminishing these very positive developments, Australia believes there is much more nuclear-weapon States can do to fulfil their obligations under Article VI, including by reaffirming commitments made to disarm under the Non-Proliferation Treaty and at previous Review Conferences. Nuclear-weapon States that have not ratified the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty should do so as soon as possible and all nuclear-weapon States should actively work towards the Treaty’s entry into force. In addition, all nuclear-weapon States should strive for the commencement of negotiations on a legally binding and verifiable fissile material cut-off treaty.

4. Australia would welcome confirmation by nuclear-weapon States of a reduced role for nuclear weapons in national security policies and commitment by all nuclear-weapon States to pursue further reductions in the operational status of
nuclear weapon systems in ways that promote international stability and security. Australia welcomed the United States’ recent commitment, in the context of its nuclear posture review, to provide strengthened negative security assurances to non-nuclear-weapon States parties to the Non-Proliferation Treaty in compliance with its obligations and encourage other nuclear-weapon States to provide similar assurances. The nuclear posture review also contains a welcome commitment by the United States that it will continue to reduce the role of nuclear weapons in deterring non-nuclear attacks, with the objective of making deterrence of nuclear attack on the United States or its allies and partners the sole purpose of United States nuclear weapons.

5. Australia is firmly committed to the goal of a world without nuclear weapons. We hold ourselves to the highest standards of compliance with our own non-proliferation commitments and obligations.

6. In 2008, Australia and Japan established the independent International Commission on Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament. The Commission — co-chaired by former Australian Minister for Foreign Affairs Gareth Evans and former Japanese Minister for Foreign Affairs Yoriko Kawaguchi — released its report on 15 December 2009. The report provides an important framework for discussions and debate on non-proliferation and nuclear disarmament, and contains recommendations for action on the issues to be considered by the Review Conference.

7. Also with Japan, Australia has brought to the Review Conference a package of a practical nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation measures that we hope will help achieve consensus on steps to strengthen the Treaty. And we have tabled with New Zealand a joint working paper that builds on the decisions of the 1995 and 2000 Review Conferences by recommending that all States parties submit systematized and regular reports on their efforts to bring about nuclear disarmament.

8. Entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty remains a priority for Australia and we continue to urge States yet to sign or ratify, especially annex II States and States in our own Asia-Pacific region, to do so without delay. Australia, Mexico and New Zealand comprised the core group that put forward the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty resolution adopted by the General Assembly at its sixty-fourth session. This resolution stressed the fundamental importance of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty to nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation and urged all States that have not yet signed the Treaty to sign and ratify it as soon as possible. In 2009, for the first time, this resolution was co-sponsored by all five nuclear-weapon States. Australia is an active participant in the development of the verification system for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, including on-site inspection procedures, and welcomes the continued progress being made — especially in relation to the International Monitoring System. Australia will host the third highest number of International Monitoring System facilities (after the United States of America and the Russian Federation).

9. A legally binding and non-discriminatory fissile material cut-off treaty, with effective verification mechanisms, is also a priority for Australia. As one of the six presidents of the Conference on Disarmament in 2009, Australia was pleased to preside over the consensus adoption by the Conference of a programme of work for the first time in over a decade. The programme included a negotiating mandate for a fissile material cut-off treaty and also called for substantive discussion on the
prevention of an arms race in outer space, negative security assurances and nuclear disarmament. We were disappointed that the Conference could not reach agreement on implementing its own decision. Australia hopes the Conference will reach agreement this year on a programme of work based on that agreed in 2009, including earliest possible commencement of negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty.

10. Effective non-proliferation is crucial to establishing a climate conducive to nuclear disarmament. Such a climate will only be established when all States are in compliance with their non-proliferation commitments, including those under this Treaty.

Outreach and regional assistance

11. Australia is a regular contributor to regional workshops and seminars on agreements such as the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. Australia also works with regional countries on practical outreach in key areas such as export controls, nuclear security and safeguards training, all of which help progressively to establish a political climate conducive to disarmament.