2010 REVIEW CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES TO THE TREATY ON THE NON-PROLIFERATION OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS
3-28 MAY 2010

SUBSIDIARY BODY I

STATEMENT BY DELL HIGGIE
AMBASSADOR FOR DISARMAMENT
ON BEHALF OF AUSTRALIA AND NEW ZEALAND

12 MAY 2010

As delivered
Mr Chairman

It is my honour on behalf of Australia and New Zealand to introduce a proposal for systematic reporting on the implementation of Article VI commitments, often described as "transparency". The proposal is available as NPT document NPT/CONF.2010/WP.40

Our proposal on reporting has a clear rationale and a practical purpose. The fundamental objective of transparency is the building of confidence through practices that demonstrate the accountability of NPT States Parties and underpin the credibility of the Treaty regime.

In the words of the opening preambular paragraphs of the Treaty, we need to have confidence in each other to ensure that nuclear weapons will never be used again. We need to have confidence in each other to prevent the wider dissemination of nuclear weapons.

Key to building this confidence, we believe, is increased reporting by the nuclear-weapon States of progressive efforts to eliminate nuclear weapons from their national arsenals and the means of their delivery. Reporting by all states parties would provide further evidence of our shared commitment to a world free of nuclear weapons.

Mr Chairman

As is well known, the Final Document of the Review Conference of 2000 included among the practical steps agreed upon a willingness - expressed in Step 12 - to submit:

"Regular reports, within the framework of the strengthened review process for the Non-Proliferation Treaty, by all States parties on the implementation of article VI..."

Step 12 is an enjoinder to all States Parties to be transparent about the implementation of Article VI and the proposal includes calls on both nuclear and non-nuclear weapon States. Given the nature of the deal that brought the Treaty into existence, and the circumstances surrounding its extension, it is natural, however, that a particular responsibility rests with the nuclear-weapon States. And in that regard we welcome their growing readiness to provide information.

Last week’s very welcome announcement by the United States of the precise numbers of its deployed nuclear weapons is the most recent concrete example of the sort of transparency we seek. The New START agreement, signed in April, by the Russian Federation and the US also offers valuable insights into the scale of holdings and projected reductions by the dominant nuclear powers.
Our proposal in WP.40 seeks to harness this positive trend toward greater transparency by these and the other nuclear-weapon States in several practical ways.

New Zealand and Australia believe that the notion of “systematic and progressive efforts to reduce nuclear weapons globally”, as agreed in the 1995 Decision on Principles and Objectives, warrants a more concrete expression.

Reports furnished in a consistent, systematic and deliberate manner ensure an official record of the accomplishments of States in carrying out their Treaty commitments and offer a basis for factual comparison in the future. It needs to be emphasized, however, that we do not see regular reporting as an end in itself but as an important means of increasing confidence in – and thus strengthening - the NPT and the broader non-proliferation regime.

WP.40 calls on the nuclear-weapon States to provide reporting to Review Conferences under four headings. These headings are: nuclear doctrine, fissile material, warhead and delivery vehicle numbers and strategic and tactical reductions. If nuclear-weapon States wished additionally to provide reports beyond the four basic headings listed, we believe this would be widely appreciated.

The proposal also calls on non-nuclear weapon states to report on their efforts to bring about nuclear disarmament, including with respect to the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and a treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons.

Mr Chairman

In the same way that conclusions can be drawn from the content of Australia’s and New Zealand’s assiduous reporting on Article VI to date, so too would the international community be able to draw conclusions from the detail and commitment of nuclear-weapon States in providing regular reports of the kind envisaged in our proposal, NPT/CONF.2010/WP.40.

We commend our proposal to you and to this Conference. We remain ready to work with all delegations towards the inclusion of its recommendations in any outcome document.