2010 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-proliferation of Nuclear Weapons
7 May 2010

Main Committee I

Statement by H.E. Gary Quinlan
Ambassador and Permanent Representative
of Australia to the United Nations

(Check against delivery)

Mr Chairman
On behalf of the Australian delegation let me offer our congratulations on your appointment. You may be assured of our full support and cooperation.

Australia’s position on nuclear disarmament is clear. As Australian Prime Minister Rudd has said: The only path to security is through the eventual elimination of nuclear weapons. Nuclear weapons continue to pose an unacceptable threat to humanity. The use of just one would cause unconscionable casualties. The use of many would threaten human civilisation. While nuclear weapons exist, there are risks of misuse, miscalculation and accident.

Australia is committed to achieving the goal of a world without nuclear weapons. We would like to see this Review Conference create a new and sustainable momentum for irreversible nuclear disarmament.
Mr Chairman

As a demonstration of our commitment to nuclear disarmament, Australia and Japan have brought to this Review Conference a joint package of disarmament and non-proliferation measures. We believe these are practical and realistic steps towards our common goal of a world free of nuclear weapons. We hope they can help achieve consensus on actions to strengthen the Treaty and encourage all member states to consider the package.

Australia also welcomes the other constructive contributions to the Review Conference, including the working paper submitted by the New Agenda Coalition. We also welcome the timely statement by the Nuclear Weapon States.

Mr Chairman

We welcome the current momentum towards nuclear disarmament.

The “New START” treaty signed in April by Presidents Obama and Medvedev is welcome evidence of a clear commitment by both States to comply with their obligations under Article VI of the NPT.

The US Nuclear Posture Review marks a significant shift in United States declaratory policy. Australia warmly welcomes the US commitment to continue to reduce the role of nuclear weapons in deterring non-nuclear attacks, with the objective of making deterrence of nuclear attack the sole purpose of US nuclear weapons. We also welcome the declaration that the United States will not use or threaten to use nuclear weapons against non-nuclear states that are party to the NPT and in compliance with their nuclear non-proliferation obligations.

We commend the unilateral arsenal reductions undertaken by France and the United Kingdom.

Australia supports further unilateral and bilateral measures to reduce global nuclear stockpiles and hopes these efforts will evolve into a comprehensive multilateral nuclear disarmament process that leads to faster, deeper, verifiable and irreversible reductions in all kinds of nuclear weapons.

Mr Chairman

We consider it essential that the Review Conference reaffirm the unequivocal undertaking by the nuclear-weapon states to accomplish the total elimination of their nuclear weapons and welcome steps taken in this direction.
The Conference must stress the application of the principles of irreversibility and verifiability to the process of nuclear disarmament.

It should also affirm the commitment by nuclear weapon states to reduce the role of nuclear weapons in their national security strategies and we would encourage the inclusion in any Conference outcome of a commitment to work collectively towards the interim objective of making nuclear deterrence the sole purpose of nuclear weapons.

Australia would like to see a strengthening of assurances that nuclear weapon states will not use or threaten to use nuclear weapons against non-nuclear-weapon states party to the NPT and in compliance with their NPT obligations. We hope any final outcomes document will reflect this.

Consistent with Article VII of the Treaty, the Review Conference should demonstrate clear support for nuclear weapons-free zones as vehicles for strong negative security assurances and encourage nuclear weapon states to work with members of such zones to resolve any outstanding issues currently preventing the granting of such assurances. Australia welcomes the commitment made by the United States at this Conference to ratify all protocols to the Treaty of Rarotonga.

Australia would like to see the Conference affirm that, as a contribution to international stability, nuclear-armed states should take all reasonable steps to reduce the risk of their weapons' accidental or unauthorised launch, and the operational status of their weapons systems.

Consistent with the responsibilities of all states party under Article VI, Australia urges the Conference to endorse the need for all states party to promote transparency including reporting regularly and systematically on steps they are taking to bring about nuclear disarmament. Australia has submitted, with New Zealand, a working paper that we hope provides practical suggestions for framing such reporting. In this context, we welcome the decision by the United States to take further transparency measures, including on stockpile numbers.

As in 1995 and 2000, the Review Conference must support the earliest possible entry into force of the CTBT and again call on states that have not done so to sign and or ratify the treaty as soon as possible.

The Review Conference should also express its disappointment that the Conference on Disarmament was unable to implement its agreed program of work in 2009, which has further delayed the long-overdue commencement of negotiation on a treaty banning the production of fissile material for weapons purposes and prevented substantive discussion of other important disarmament-related issues.
Australia hopes the Review Conference will reaffirm the critical importance of beginning and completing negotiations on a treaty banning the production of fissile material for weapons purposes, without preconditions. In the meantime, the Conference should call on all states possessing nuclear weapons to declare or maintain moratoria on the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons.

Mr Chairman

The NPT is the bedrock of the international security architecture. Its central commitments and bargain remain as important today as it was forty years ago. It has proved remarkably resilient to shocks and challenges. It has long made a critical contribution to global peace and security. We must do our very best to ensure it continues to serve this purpose well into the future and certainly for as long as nuclear weapons exist.

All states have an interest, and a role to play, in nuclear disarmament. All states will need to make full use of the opportunities of this conference to engage constructively and agree practical, realistic nuclear disarmament measures.

We look forward to working with you, Mr Chairman, and all States Party to the NPT, to reinforce efforts towards a nuclear weapons free world.