



AUSTRALIA

Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons

Second Session of the Preparatory Committee

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Opening Statement to the Second Preparatory Committee for the 2010 Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conference

Mr Chairman

On behalf of the Australian delegation I warmly congratulate you on your appointment as Chairman. We look forward to working with you.

The Australian Government led by Prime Minister Rudd is committed to a new, more active role in multilateral affairs. Reflecting this commitment Australia will seek a UN Security Council seat in 2012 for 2013-14. And Australia will work to advance and strengthen the nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament architecture, at the core of which is the NPT. This commitment drives our determination to work creatively in partnership with other states to strengthen the NPT.

Nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament and a strong NPT are important to many Australians, as they are to the citizens of every country represented here today. We welcome the active engagement that Australian civil society has demonstrated in these issues, and look forward to a continuing, constructive dialogue on these issues in the future.

The current review cycle offers a crucial opportunity for all states parties to renew their commitments to the Treaty and to look for ways we can all work together to realise its vision of a world free of nuclear weapons.

There is more in the NPT that unites us than divides us. For it provides a key underpinning of international and national security, without which we all lose. We must build on this common interest to strengthen the NPT.

In this regard, we especially draw delegations' attention to the declaration in 2005 by the Seven Nation Initiative, of which Australia is a member, which highlighted consensus within a diverse group of states, including nuclear and non-nuclear weapon states. It is in the Seven Nation Initiative spirit of partnership that Australia will work with all states to advance our common goals in non-proliferation and disarmament.

The 2010 Review Conference must deliver firm results across each of the three pillars of the Treaty. We must strive for progress in non-proliferation and disarmament, as well as acknowledging that legitimate peaceful uses of nuclear energy are in the interests of all. In all this, we can never lose sight of the fact that our ultimate objective – and one that remains as relevant today as in 1968 – is a world free of nuclear weapons. This objective will never be realised without sustained and creative efforts by all nations to uphold and strengthen the NPT.

Mr Chairman

It is essential that nuclear-weapon states – and other states possessing nuclear weapons – maintain an energetic commitment to dismantling their nuclear arsenals. Indeed, contemporary challenges to non-proliferation cannot be confronted in isolation from a process of systematic, verifiable nuclear disarmament.

Australia welcomes the progress made so far in disarmament by nuclear-weapon states, including commitments made since the last Preparatory Committee. Yet more needs to be done if nuclear-weapon states are to reassure non-nuclear weapon states of the energy behind their commitments under the Treaty to eliminate nuclear weapons.

We look to all nuclear-weapon states to make deeper, faster and irreversible reductions in all types of nuclear weapons. All nuclear-weapon states should sign and ratify the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty as a matter of urgency, and support practical measures to end the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons.

We look especially to the United States and the Russian Federation to conclude successfully a new, binding agreement to reduce further the numbers of their nuclear weapons. Both countries have successfully worked together on a number of occasions to take bold steps toward nuclear disarmament. The time has come for them to do so once again with the firm objective of reducing – in a systematic and verifiable manner – the numbers of all types of nuclear weapons that they hold.

This task has a particular urgency as the expiry of START I in 2009 looms before us, especially considering that SORT will expire in 2012. Strong leadership from the two countries which together hold the vast majority of the world's nuclear weapons will significantly advance the cause of nuclear disarmament, which is in turn so crucial to a wider strengthening of the NPT.

Australia acknowledges that non-nuclear-weapon states also have an important role to play in building the climate of stability and trust which allows nuclear disarmament to proceed. Signature and ratification of the CTBT must be a priority for all.

As an equally urgent priority non-nuclear-weapon states must do all that they can to support progress in the Conference on Disarmament to commence negotiations on a Fissile Material Cut-Off Treaty. Australia is greatly disappointed that the flexibility and will shown by nearly all CD member states to negotiate an FMCT is being thwarted by the very smallest of minorities.

Mr Chairman

It is deeply concerning that there has been little improvement in the nuclear non-proliferation situation since all delegations last met. We must all be in no doubt that the challenges to non-proliferation presented by Iran and the DPRK threaten all aspects of the NPT.

Iran continues to undermine the international non-proliferation regime through its determined pursuit of a uranium enrichment capability without a convincing peaceful justification, and its failure to comply with the IAEA Board of Governors and the UN Security Council. Despite repeated assurances, Iran has also yet to cooperate fully with the IAEA and answer all outstanding questions about its past nuclear activities, including those with possible military dimensions. Iran's on-going refusal to engage with the international community's concerns further reduces international confidence in the peaceful nature of Iran's nuclear activities.

The international community should not be misled. No one wants to deny Iran's legitimate rights to peaceful nuclear energy. But, as recognised in the Final Document of the 2000 Review Conference, rights to peaceful use are not unconditional and must be in conformity with Articles I, II and III of the Treaty. Australia supports the P5+ Germany's efforts to promote a long term diplomatic solution to Iran's challenge to the non-proliferation regime.

Australia welcomes the progress made in the Six Party Talks since mid-2007, including the shutdown and progress toward dismantlement of the Yongbyon nuclear facilities as a practical step towards the DPRK's denuclearisation. But we are disappointed at the DPRK's continuing failure to meet its commitment under the October 3 2007 Six Party Talks agreement to provide a complete and correct declaration of its nuclear programs by 31 December. This declaration

will be a crucial demonstration of the DPRK's sincerity and we urge the DPRK to provide it without further delay.

Given our commitment to global non-proliferation objectives, Australia will continue to support the Six Party Talks process, and urges the DPRK to fulfil its commitments and seize what is its best chance to rejoin the international community and ensure its future security and prosperity.

As a major uranium supplier, Australia recognises the important role suppliers play in nuclear non-proliferation. We have made the Additional Protocol a condition of supply to non-nuclear weapon states, and strongly encourage all other uranium suppliers to do likewise. Indeed, it is Australia's view that a comprehensive safeguards agreement with the IAEA, along with an Additional Protocol, should form the basic standard of verification for non-nuclear weapons states.

The problems posed by withdrawal from the Treaty must be a key topic of discussion by states parties in the lead-up to the 2010 Review Conference. Australia looks forward to a constructive discussion at this Preparatory Committee to explore how we might strengthen the disincentive for withdrawal from the NPT.

We look to the UN Security Council to respond effectively when the non-proliferation regime – of which the NPT is the keystone – is challenged, and for all states to support the UN Security Council.

Mr Chairman

Central to the long-term strength of the NPT is its guarantee of access to peaceful nuclear energy. The NPT is central in ensuring that the global resurgence of interest in nuclear energy, in what is commonly termed the "nuclear renaissance", reinforces nuclear non-proliferation, rather than opening up new challenges.

The IAEA Technical Cooperation Program and Regional Cooperative Agreements are key means of ensuring that countries are able to benefit from the peaceful uses of nuclear technology. We should all welcome the important role of the IAEA in ensuring that developing countries in particular are able to peacefully employ nuclear technology. Australia supports a number of Regional Cooperative Agreement programs in the Asia-Pacific.

Australia is also a key player in international mechanisms to ensure that the international nuclear market reinforces non-proliferation without restricting peaceful access to nuclear technology. The ongoing discussion of nuclear fuel cycle assurances is an important one both in supporting the peaceful use of nuclear energy and in upholding the highest nuclear non-proliferation standards. We share a strong interest in exploring constructively proposals which support and strengthen the non-proliferation objectives of the NPT. Equally, the resurgence of interest in nuclear energy reinforces the importance of ensuring safety and security in the nuclear fuel cycle.

With these comments, Mr Chairman, the Australian delegation will work with you and other delegations to this meeting, joined by our shared interest in maintaining the strength of this Treaty which is so vital to international security. We must take forward the vision of a nuclear-weapon free world that is at the heart of the NPT. With determined and creative efforts by all states, we will succeed in achieving this vision. All delegations can be certain that Australia will be at the heart of these efforts.