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AUSTRALIA

**Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear
Weapons**

Second Session of the Preparatory Committee

Statement on Cluster One Issues

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(Check against delivery)

Mr Chairman

Australia under a new Government is fully committed to realising a world free from nuclear weapons.

Such a world may seem little more than a distant vision or vain hope, all the more so given recent proliferation threats and the scale of the nuclear disarmament task.

Yet for all these difficulties, the vision endures, underpinned by the NPT and the international community's shared and enduring interests in the security it provides.

For through the NPT, states have successfully prevented widespread proliferation of nuclear weapons and have begun the elimination of those that already exist.

The NPT is thus nothing less than the keystone of global efforts to realise a nuclear-weapons-free world. Australia remains fully committed to supporting the NPT towards realising this goal.

Mr Chairman

A world free of nuclear weapons will require carefully calibrated steps that buttress international peace and security.

Every state, whether holding nuclear weapons or not, must play a part in realising that world.

And at an appropriate time, the international community will likely need to consider complementary legal frameworks, including a possible nuclear weapons convention, for the eventual abolition of nuclear weapons.

Nuclear weapon states – and those possessing nuclear weapons outside the Treaty – must demonstrate their commitment to nuclear disarmament through word and deed.

Australia is encouraged that several nuclear weapon states have indeed outlined continuing efforts to reduce their holdings of nuclear weapons.

In this regard, Australia welcomes reductions in nuclear weapons, including as set out in recent announcements.

These efforts – and the improved transparency with which they have been undertaken – are welcome.

But the international community, Australia included, remains hungry for further, irreversible reductions and greater transparency from states holding nuclear weapons.

Concurrent with their warhead reductions, nuclear weapon states need to confirm a reduced role for their nuclear weapons in national security policies.

Australia supports efforts undertaken by these states to increase transparency and confidence between them, thereby helping to reduce their reliance on nuclear weapons in their national security policies.

We welcome the efforts of some nuclear weapons states to reduce the operational status of their nuclear arsenals...

...and to de-target nuclear-armed missiles and increase the time required for their launch.

Such steps are practical disarmament measures that can raise the threshold for nuclear weapons use and help avoid the risk of miscalculation.

Mr Chairman

Such practical disarmament measures are the responsibility of all states possessing nuclear weapons, whether they are a party to this Treaty or not.

Australia looks to the states outside the NPT to shoulder their share of responsibility for nuclear disarmament.

Pending the time when these states join the NPT, they and all other states yet to do so, should undertake the steps necessary to ratify or accede to the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test Ban Treaty.

Australia also looks to states within and outside the NPT to commit to a non-discriminatory, legally-binding treaty prohibiting the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons and nuclear explosive devices.

For too long, this practical step towards irreversible nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation has gone unfulfilled.

When the Conference on Disarmament meets again in a fortnight's time, it must seize the opportunity afforded by the President's draft decision (CD 1840), and commence negotiations on such a treaty.

Mr Chairman

Non-nuclear weapon states are right to look to those states possessing nuclear weapons to take the lead on nuclear disarmament.

But the vision of a world free from nuclear weapons will only be achieved if they too are prepared to abide by their non-proliferation commitments and to foster an international environment conducive to disarmament.

In this regard, Australia continues to hold serious concerns about Iran's violations of its NPT safeguards obligations.

We remain concerned about its continuing development of uranium enrichment facilities in defiance of the IAEA Board of Governors and the UN Security Council.

Australia also regards North Korea's nuclear test and claimed possession of nuclear weapons with great concern and calls on the DPRK to engage constructively in the six-party talks.

In contrast to these examples, non-nuclear weapon states can play a positive role in support of nuclear disarmament.

Indeed, this has been Australia's approach over successive years, and which the new Government will reinvigorate through a strengthened commitment to multilateral arms control and disarmament.

A core feature will remain our strong commitment to the NPT, and its objectives across all three pillars – nuclear disarmament, non-proliferation and peaceful uses of nuclear energy.

Australia will support multilateral efforts that strengthen the environment for nuclear disarmament, in particular the entry into force of the CTBT, as well as practically oriented UNGA resolutions on nuclear disarmament and related issues.

Australia will back this multilateral effort with continued work in the region to promote non-proliferation and strengthened safeguards against terrorist access to and use of nuclear materials.

And we will maintain our strong record of national implementation, ensuring our uranium exports remain subject to strict safeguards arrangements, underwritten by our commitment to the Additional Protocol and bilateral agreements.

Mr Chairman

We are making progress toward realising the vision a world free from nuclear weapons, albeit neither as fast nor as consistently as we would wish.

Yet one thing is certain: that without a renewed global commitment to nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation (for the two are inextricably linked), the vision will remain little more than that.

Australia is ready to join such a renewed commitment; ready to ensure a revitalised NPT through progress on nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation...

...and ready to ensure that the NPT continues to serve the security interests of the international community by helping us realise a world free of nuclear weapons.

I thank you.