



# AUSTRALIA



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## **UNGA 63 First Committee**

**13 October 2008**

# **Thematic debate on Nuclear Weapons**

## **Statement by H.E. Caroline Millar Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Australia to the Conference on Disarmament**

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Mr Chairman

The Australian Government is strongly committed to nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament and the ultimate goal of a nuclear weapons-free world.

As Australian Prime Minister Kevin Rudd said in Kyoto on 9 June when he proposed an International Commission on Nuclear Non-proliferation and Disarmament,

“In the past decade, the world has not paid adequate attention to nuclear weapons ...

We have not seen the same focus on the danger of nuclear weapons that we saw at the height of the Cold War”.

While we no longer live with the daily fear of nuclear war between two superpowers, the last decade has seen concerning developments in the nuclear landscape.

Nuclear-armed states outside the NPT have emerged. The DPRK has announced its withdrawal from the NPT and conducted a nuclear test. Iran is engaging in proliferation sensitive nuclear activities in violation of international law. The risk of proliferation and nuclear and radiological terrorism is increasing, including through black market activity.

And there is mounting post-Cold War discontent with NPT nuclear-weapon states' performance in meeting their disarmament obligations.

That said, since this Committee last met, Australia has been encouraged by a discernible, if tentative, shift in mood on nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament..

### **The International Commission on Nuclear Non-proliferation and Disarmament**

Prime Minister Rudd's proposal in June to establish an International Commission on Nuclear Non-proliferation and Disarmament was designed to reinvigorate our work in the lead-up to the 2010 NPT Review Conference and beyond.

Japan has joined us in this endeavour and former Australian and Japanese Foreign Ministers, Gareth Evans and Yoriko Kawaguchi, have agreed to Co-chair the Commission.

Other eminent and outstanding individuals – many well known to this Committee – from around the world have taken on the challenging role of Commissioner.

They have accepted a tough task – to bring fresh vision to the interconnected challenges of non-proliferation, disarmament and peaceful uses of nuclear energy and to make practical and realistic recommendations.

The Commission will meet in Sydney for the first time this month - the first of six planned meetings.

With less than two years to go before the NPT Review Conference, there is a real urgency attached to the Commission's task.

### **The 2010 NPT Review Conference**

The NPT remains the cornerstone of the disarmament and non-proliferation regimes.

The NPT is the most significant and successful arms control instrument of the nuclear age. It has successfully prevented widespread proliferation of nuclear weapons and paved the way for the elimination of those that already exist.

But 40 years after its opening for signature, the treaty is under great pressure.

The 2010 Review Conference offers a real opportunity to put our work back on track. This opportunity must not be lost. Success will require genuine commitments by all NPT member states.

We hope the new Commission will contribute to shaping a global consensus in the lead-up to the Review Conference ...

... and offer ways for us to work together to ensure a successful meeting.

## **Practical steps towards disarmament**

Mr Chairman

The realisation of a world free of nuclear weapons demands balanced, progressive and reinforcing steps.

As required under the NPT, all states must play their part.

But the international community rightly looks to the nuclear-weapon states - and those possessing nuclear weapon capabilities outside the NPT - to take the lead through lasting reductions of their nuclear arsenals.

Australia welcomes the steps in this direction taken by several nuclear-weapon states.

In particular, we acknowledge the deep reduction in warhead numbers – as well as delivery systems – undertaken by the United States and the Russian Federation, including as part of the Moscow Treaty. We note the historically low number of nuclear warheads that are expected to remain in service by 2012 and welcome the unilateral cuts made to its tactical stockpile by the United States.

Strong leadership from both countries will be needed to ensure further deep and irreversible cuts. We look to the United States and Russia to ensure on-going and transparent bilateral reductions to all weapons in their nuclear arsenals beyond the expiry of the Moscow Treaty in 2012.

Australia has also welcomed the announcement by the United Kingdom to reduce its holdings of nuclear warheads by 20 per cent and France's announcement that it will reduce its nuclear arsenal by one-third.

Despite these positive steps, however, Australia looks to nuclear-armed states within and outside the NPT to continue efforts towards the elimination of nuclear arsenals.

Such efforts must be undertaken transparently. We welcome reports at NPT PrepComs and other meetings, but note that transparency is applied unequally by nuclear-weapon states. The logic of "trust but verify" remains as important today as it did during the Cold War.

We encourage nuclear-armed states to reassess and limit the role of nuclear weapons in their security policies ...

... and to reduce further the operational status of their nuclear weapons in ways that promote global security and stability.

Mr Chairman

The burden of responsibility for nuclear disarmament is not the nuclear-weapon states' alone. All states must contribute to ensuring an environment conducive to nuclear disarmament.

Australia is playing its part in strengthening that environment.

Australia is a committed party to the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty. Australian Foreign Minister Stephen Smith chaired the CTBT Fourth Ministerial Meeting here in New York only last month.

It is regrettable that after a decade, there remain nine Annex II states still to join the CTBT.

Signature and ratification of the CTBT without delay must be a priority for all.

Australia is also a party to the South Pacific Nuclear Weapon Free Zone. The development of such zones is a real and important step towards nuclear disarmament, providing binding negative security assurances.

As one of the six Presidents of the 2009 Conference on Disarmament, we will work with all CD members to progress work on a Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty.

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

... and it is unacceptable by any standard that the CD – the world's only multilateral negotiating body on disarmament – has for so long remained idle.

### **The threat of nuclear non-proliferation**

Mr Chairman

The nuclear non-proliferation regime continues to be put under pressure by certain states both within and outside the NPT. These states seek to reap the benefits of the bargain struck between states in the NPT negotiations while evading the obligations of that bargain.

Australia supports the use of diplomacy to bring all states within the nuclear non-proliferation regime and under IAEA safeguards.

We strongly urge all states to swiftly ratify the IAEA's Additional Protocol. Doing so should be seen as a way of enhancing the confidence of all states in the peaceful nature of a state's nuclear activities.

Mr Chairman

The DPRK's nuclear weapons activities continue to pose a significant threat to regional security and global non-proliferation objectives.

Australia welcomes the agreement between the DPRK and the United States on a set of measures to verify the DPRK's denuclearisation and the DPRK's removal from the US list of state sponsors of terrorism is a consequence of this agreement.

Australia now looks to the DPRK to work cooperatively with its Six-Party partners in carrying out this agreement. In this context we welcomed the DPRK's agreement to resume disablement of its Yongbyon nuclear facilities.

Australia is committed to supporting the Six-Party Talks and will work closely with the United States, Japan, South Korea and the other members of the Six-Party Talks to encourage North Korea to denuclearise.

Mr Chairman

Australia is deeply concerned that Iran is persisting with its proliferation –sensitive activities in violation of four legally binding UN Security Council resolutions. These are not the actions of a state seeking to restore confidence and address the international community's concerns about the nature of its nuclear program.

Iran needs to comply immediately with its obligations and suspend its activities related to uranium enrichment, reprocessing and heavy water. It must grant the IAEA the access it needs to remove the international community's justifiable doubts about Iran's peaceful intentions. Iran has a clear choice: cooperation or further isolation from the international community.

Australia is also concerned by information indicating the undeclared construction of a nuclear reactor in Syria. Australia regrets that Syria has not yet responded to the IAEA's request for access to additional information and locations of its nuclear facilities. We call on Syria to show maximum cooperation and transparency and to provide all the information needed by the IAEA to complete its assessment.

Mr Chairman

Australia will exercise leadership and determination in the global effort to eliminate nuclear weapons ...

... including by contributing to an environment conducive to a successful 2010 NPT Review Conference.

For progress on nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation is fundamental to enduring global peace and security.

Australia looks forward to working constructively with you and other delegations during this First Committee session and beyond to achieve the progress we all seek.

I thank you.