



AUSTRALIA



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First Committee
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General debate on all disarmament and international security agenda items

**Statement by H.E. the Hon Robert Hill
Ambassador and Permanent Representative
of Australia to the United Nations**

(Check against delivery)

UNGA 63 First Committee General Statement

Mr Chairman

The Australian Government came to power late last year with a reinvigorated commitment to the United Nations, to multilateral diplomacy and to nuclear disarmament.

We place great value on the work of the First Committee and the part it can play in promoting international security.

Australia will exercise leadership and determination to inject greater energy, focus and an emphasis on substantive outcomes to the deliberations of both this Committee and other non-proliferation, arms control and disarmament forums...

... the Australian Foreign Minister, Mr Smith, recently chaired the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty Conference here in New York...

...as one of the six Presidents of the Conference on Disarmament in 2009, Australia's Ambassador for Disarmament in Geneva will promote shared interests in getting the Conference on Disarmament back to work. A key objective for Australia, as for most

members of the CD, is the commencement of negotiations, without preconditions, on a Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty...

...and Australia looks forward to hosting the next meeting of the Missile Technology Control Regime in November.

International Commission on Nuclear Non-proliferation and Disarmament

Mr Chairman,

Let us be frank: a fundamental challenge for the international community remains the deeply worrying lack of progress on nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament.

It was with the clear aim of breaking the existing international stalemate that the Australian Prime Minister, Mr Rudd, proposed in June this year the establishment of an International Commission on Nuclear Non-proliferation and Disarmament.

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...

... and other eminent and outstanding individuals from around the world have been added to the list of Commissioners.

The Commission promises a fresh and imaginative vision. It aims to change the formulaic and unproductive nature of much of the current nuclear debate between nuclear weapon states and non-nuclear weapon states, developed and developing country NPT parties, and NPT parties and non-parties.

Instead, it will take an inclusive approach, and make practical and realistic recommendations on non-proliferation, disarmament and the peaceful uses of nuclear energy.

With less than two years to go before the 2010 NPT Review Conference, there is a real urgency to move forward on these issues. The Commission aims to help shape a global consensus on them in the lead up to 2010 and beyond.

Encouraging progress on conventional disarmament

Mr Chairman,

Encouraging steps on conventional disarmament this past year shows that it is indeed possible for the international community to make progress on difficult security issues if a sufficient number of states are determined to do so.

The **Oslo process on cluster munitions** is an outstanding example of this. The Cluster Munitions Convention concluded in Dublin in May, will be a strong humanitarian instrument.

The Convention will deliver protection and assistance to civilians, and ban an entire class of weapon, as defined by the Convention. In so doing, it will also protect cooperation between nations in peace-keeping and enforcement operations.

Australia, along with many other states, had become convinced that the time had come to act against cluster munitions that cause unacceptable harm. We are proud to have played a strong role in the negotiation of this Convention.

The Australian Government remains confident it will be in a position to sign the Convention this year. We encourage all states to join this important treaty.

Mr Chairman,

Small arms and light weapons threaten good governance, development, and law and order in many countries.

We are delighted that this year has seen global action on small arms and light weapons back on track...

...with a reinvigorated commitment to the 2001 UN Programme of Action on Small Arms and Light Weapons at the Biennial Meeting of States (BMS) in July.

Australia was pleased to contribute to this outcome, including as chair of the Geneva Process and of its working group on the BMS.

We will remain engaged with other states and regional organisations to implement the Programme, with an emphasis on cooperation with Pacific Island neighbours...

... and we fully support the resolution on the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons presented at this session by Columbia, South Africa and Japan.

Further progress needed...

Mr Chairman,

Progress of this order, based on a clear vision, is needed across the arms control agenda.

An **Arms Trade Treaty** is greatly needed if we are to arrest the irresponsible and illicit transfer of conventional arms and components.

A legally binding, multilateral treaty could bring much needed transparency and accountability; codify existing best practice in the responsible transfer of conventional weapons; prevent human rights abuse and the destabilising accumulation of arms.

We welcome the consensus report of the Group of Governmental Experts including the recommendation to engage in further discussions. We are very pleased to be a co-author of the resolution seeking to establish an open-ended working group in 2009.

Australia remains committed to the goal of a comprehensive solution to the global **landmines** problem...

... and will, as past President of the Mine Ban Convention, join with the current President, Jordan, and the President-designate, Switzerland, in presenting the Mine Ban Convention resolution.

We can all be proud that our efforts since the Mine-Ban Convention entered into force in 1999 have meant that the number of new victims from landmines has consistently fallen and large tracts of land cleared with over 40 million mines destroyed ...

... but ongoing and integrated approaches to mine action are needed to improve the livelihood of landmine and explosive remnants of war survivors, their families and communities.

While Australia and many others are prepared to accept the prohibitions of the recently concluded Cluster Munitions Convention, some major producers and users seem likely to remain outside it. We will therefore continue efforts in the **Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons** to achieve meaningful prohibitions on the use of cluster munitions by those who have not engaged in the Oslo process.

Mr Chairman,

Black market weapons-related activity, including through **illicit brokering** and intermediation services, is seriously destabilising. Such trade illegally circumnavigates national, regional and international trade controls.

The Republic of Korea and Australia will table a new resolution on the prevention of illicit brokering activities during this First Committee session to put this issue comprehensively on the UN agenda.

Our consultations with states on the draft resolution have revealed a heartening degree of support for improved international cooperation to address this proliferation threat.

The draft resolution affirms that brokering controls should not hamper legitimate trade and technology transfer...

... and calls on states to adopt national laws and measures to prevent illicit brokering, and fully implement relevant treaties, instruments, resolutions and initiatives.

..including on WMD

Mr Chairman

Australia is committed to preventing the proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction.

With respect to **nuclear disarmament**, many believe the time to act has come: the opportunity for meaningful progress afforded by the 2010 NPT Review Conference must not be lost.

We have been encouraged by the bipartisan and realistic case for nuclear disarmament set out by the US statesmen, Henry Kissinger, Sam Nunn, William Perry and George Shultz.

The international community rightly looks to the nuclear weapon states to take the lead through lasting reductions of their nuclear arsenals. We welcome the significant steps taken by some.

But we continue to look to states both within and outside the NPT that possess nuclear weapons to continue efforts towards the elimination of their nuclear arsenals and to do so transparently.

And we encourage the nuclear weapon states to reduce further the operational status of their nuclear weapons in ways that promote global security and stability.

That said, 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.

Mr Chairman,

The **nuclear non-proliferation regime** continues to be put under pressure by the actions of a few states.

We remain concerned about the DPRK's nuclear activities which continue to pose a significant threat to regional security and global non-proliferation objectives. We support the six-party process and urge the DPRK to cooperate with this process and implement agreed actions.

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 address the international community's concerns about the nature of its nuclear program.

Iran needs to comply immediately with its obligations and suspend its uranium enrichment and reprocessing-related activities. It must grant the IAEA the access it needs to remove the international community's justifiable doubts about Iran's peaceful intentions.

The DPRK and Iran cases are critical challenges to the non-proliferation regime.

Their actions undermine international confidence, security and stability that is fundamental not only to preventing the proliferation of nuclear weapons, but also to ensuring further progress on nuclear disarmament.

Mr Chairman

Nuclear weapon free zones can play an important role in preventing proliferation, consistent with NPT obligations. They also have an important role as a vehicle for the

nuclear weapon states to provide binding negative security assurances to non-nuclear weapon states.

Australia is party to the South Pacific Nuclear Weapons Free Zone in our own region.

Mr Chairman

The Australian Government is dedicated to identifying practical, tangible ways to prevent proliferation and promote disarmament.

Progress has been made during the year and we know where further movement is required.

The Australian delegation looks forward to working constructively with you and other delegations to take forward this Committee's important work.