



AUSTRALIAN MISSION TO THE UNITED NATIONS

E-mail [australia@un.int](mailto:australia@un.int)

150 East 42<sup>nd</sup> Street, New York NY 10017-5612 Ph 212 - 351 6600 Fax 212 - 351 6610 [www.AustraliaUN.org](http://www.AustraliaUN.org)

**First Committee**  
6 October 2009

## **General debate on all disarmament and international security agenda items**

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

(Check against delivery)

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Mr Chairman

Australia welcomes the encouraging signals over the last twelve months for international peace and security- most recently the successful UN Security Council Summit on Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament. The dynamics have shifted. We are at a point where – with resolve – we can make genuine progress.

The Australian Government is committed to the United Nations, to multilateral diplomacy and to nuclear disarmament and we pledge our continued determination to inject greater energy, focus and an emphasis on substantive outcomes into the deliberations of both this Committee and other disarmament and non-proliferation forums. That is why the Australian and Japanese Prime Ministers established the International Commission on Nuclear Non-proliferation and Disarmament in June last year.

The Commission has engaged comprehensively in an effort to generate valuable new thinking to overcome what have too often been sterile and formulaic debates in the past. It is working with nuclear weapon states and non-nuclear weapon states, with NPT parties and non-parties, and across all regions.

In the next few months, the Commission will produce its report. Its aim is to chart a practical course to achieve a strengthened non-proliferation and disarmament regime, leading to the ultimate elimination of nuclear weapons, drawing clear attention to who should be doing what and when, and how all the many different policy elements come together over the short, medium and long-term.

Mr Chairman

Australian Prime Minister Rudd said in his address to the General Assembly two weeks ago "One truth remains absolutely clear: the proliferation of nuclear weapons can never make any country more secure".

We look to states possessing nuclear weapons to exercise leadership. We were greatly encouraged by the bold re-statement of a commitment to a world without nuclear weapons by US President Obama in April. We welcome the commitment made by the United States and Russia in their START negotiations to reduce their nuclear arsenals and we welcome the important reductions made by France and the United Kingdom.

Australia fully endorses the UN Security Council's historic resolution 1887 which we view as an expression of the international community's commitment to increased global security, including creating the conditions for a world free of nuclear weapons.

And we are encouraged by the revitalisation of efforts to bring into force the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). We welcome Trinidad and Tobago's commitment on 1 October that it will join the Treaty.

We acknowledge – indeed, stress - the importance of nuclear weapon free zones and congratulate African states on the recent entry into force of the Pelindaba Treaty.

Mr Chairman

In building an enduring commitment to a world without nuclear weapons, the challenge rests not only with the nuclear-weapon states. We all have a part to play. As our Prime Minister said in his General Assembly speech, "The United Nations is not a place. It is not an institution. It is us".

As one of the six Presidents of the Conference on Disarmament in 2009, Australia was pleased to contribute to the achievement of the Conference's 29 May decision on a program of work. Appropriately the work program includes negotiation of a verifiable Fissile Material Cut-Off Treaty (FMCT), an instrument we consider to be decisive for progress.

Disappointingly, the Conference failed to find the consensus it needed to implement its own decision. The international community should be rightly frustrated by this institutionalised inertia which – frankly – brings all of us into disrepute. I can't explain to the average Australian why we can't make progress. We have to do better.

It is essential that the Conference on Disarmament undertake substantive work in 2010 in all areas of its work program.

Mr Chairman

The 2010 Review Conference of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) must be a compelling priority. The treaty is under great pressure and all of us must work to ensure a successful Review Conference which recognises and underlines the collective security benefits the treaty continues to provide to all member states.

The DPRK's nuclear test earlier this year was a stark reminder of the need to maintain and strengthen the nuclear non-proliferation regime. The recent disclosure of Iran's covert second enrichment facility reinforces our concerns, and those of the international community, about Iran's nuclear program.

Australia urges the DPRK to comply with its international obligations, including UN Security Council Resolutions 1695, 1718 and 1874, to return to the Six-Party Talks and to implement its commitments to abandon its nuclear weapons program.

Iran too must abide by UN Security Council resolutions and cooperate fully with the International Atomic Energy Agency to reassure the international community that its nuclear program is entirely peaceful. The 1 October meeting of the P5-plus-1 and Iran was a constructive first step. Iran needs now to follow up by providing the IAEA full and transparent access to the enrichment facility at Qom.

Mr Chairman

Continuing our efforts on conventional weapons must also remain a key priority for our Committee. As my delegation has stressed on a number of occasions, an Arms Trade Treaty is greatly needed if we are to arrest the irresponsible and illicit transfer of conventional arms and components. We welcome the outcome of the Open-ended Working Group sessions this year and strongly endorse the proposal to use the remaining sessions as preparatory committees ahead of a diplomatic conference to negotiate the Convention.

Efforts on small arms and light weapons should also remain a focus. Efforts in our own region - the Pacific - on implementation of the UN Programme of Action on Small Arms and Light Weapons have and will continue. In their August communiqué the leaders of the Pacific Islands Forum (PIF) - of which Australia is current Chair - underlined how genuine the threat is from these weapons. As some states are aware, in partnership with the United Nations Australia hosted a regional meeting on the Programme of Action in Sydney in June this year where experiences and ideas were exchanged on curbing the illicit trade of small arms.

We fully support the resolution on the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons presented at this session by South Africa, Colombia and Japan which sets a strong framework for enhancing understanding and implementation of the Programme of Action ahead of the next Biennial Meeting of States and Review Conference.

I also wish to highlight the ongoing priority Australia attaches to early entry into force of the Convention on Cluster Munitions and our continued efforts under the auspices of the

Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons to achieve meaningful prohibitions on the use of cluster munitions by those who have not yet committed to the Cluster Munitions Convention.

We also remain committed to the goal of a comprehensive solution to the global landmines problem and look forward to ambitious outcomes from the Cartagena Summit on a Mine-free World, to be held in late November.

Mr Chairman

In closing, I should repeat that the Australian Government is dedicated to identifying pragmatic steps to achieve disarmament and non-proliferation across the entire agenda of this Committee.

The challenges are obvious. But it is the costs of inaction that we must more forcefully acknowledge. We are at a pivotal moment when we all must recognise that the possession of nuclear weapons in particular comes at a strategic cost to states, which is greater than the perceived strategic benefits.

We look forward to working closely with other delegations as we face this reality. We must recommit to do much more.