



AUSTRALIA

Address by

**the Ambassador for Disarmament and
Permanent Representative to the United Nations**

Mr Michael Smith

FMCT

Geneva, Thursday 28 August 2003

(Please check against delivery)

Madam President

Could I extend to you, Ambassador Inoguchi, my sincere congratulations and best wishes on your appointment as President of this Conference. I can assure you of my delegation's complete cooperation as you strive for progress in the work of the Conference, and in particular as you prepare the CD's Annual Report.

Could I also take this opportunity to thank the delegation of Japan for the working paper it introduced to the Conference on 14 August this year on a treaty to Ban the Production of Fissile Material for Nuclear Weapons and Other Nuclear Explosive Devices. This working paper is invaluable not only in furthering the understanding of the range of issues that will need to be addressed once FMCT negotiations commence, but also in promoting productive debate at plenary sessions while we wait for agreement on a program of work.

Madam President

Negotiation of an FMCT remains an important policy objective for Australia. It is a key provision supported in the outcomes of successive NPT Review Conferences in 1995 and 2000, and by consensus General Assembly resolutions.

An FMCT should prescribe the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons and nuclear explosive devices. Such an FMCT will make a vital contribution to nuclear non-proliferation and nuclear disarmament by capping fissile material available for nuclear weapons use.

When implemented in conjunction with appropriate physical protection measures - many of which are already in force - it will also reduce the likelihood of illicit trafficking of fissile material in the future.

Given that the A5 proposal allows for negotiations on an FMCT to start, we urge all parties to accept this work program.

Australia recognizes that negotiating a verification regime for the FMCT will not be easy. However, the final document adopted at the 2000 NPT Review Conference sets out a desired timeframe and puts the FMCT in its rightful context.

Thus, Australia sees merit in considering further Japan's suggestion that, given the variety and complexity of issues under technical deliberation, a group of experts be established in advance of the commencement of negotiations, similar to the one established for technical work on the verification of the CTBT. This could be useful to prepare a common understanding for future negotiations on the issues that are technically complicated but which also require difficult political judgements. Such an exercise would serve to complement the invaluable educative and information sharing FMCT seminar series organised by our Dutch colleagues - an informal process that Australia continues to fully support.

Given that NPT non-nuclear weapon states already adhere to the goals of an FMCT through their NPT membership and their IAEA safeguards agreements, the FMCT is the next appropriate step for other states in the pursuit of international nuclear disarmament. An essential contribution NPT non-nuclear weapon states can, and should, make towards encouraging nuclear disarmament is to conclude an IAEA Additional Protocol - thereby reinforcing their commitment not to pursue nuclear weapons. Australia takes this opportunity to urge all such states which have not already done so to sign, ratify and implement the Additional Protocol - which is now established as the NPT safeguards standard.

Madam President

Let me conclude by once again urging all members of the CD to agree to a program of work now, so that this conference can once again productively contribute to enhancing global security.

Thank you Madam President.