



AUSTRALIA

Statement to the 964th Session of the Conference on Disarmament

Delivered by:

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the United Nations and to the Conference on Disarmament,
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Mr President

Australia welcomes any initiative which would get the CD back to work. We are in no doubt that seven years of inaction has badly damaged the standing and integrity of the CD and is raising fundamental questions about its future. Australia would support any proposal for a work program capable of attracting the support of all CD members.

Australia welcomes the statement made by the distinguished Ambassador of the United States on 29 July reaffirming her country's support for the FMCT. We remain strong supporters of the FMCT and hope the US statement will generate new momentum for a start to negotiations.

The United States has indicated that it has concerns about whether effective FMCT verification is achievable.

Australia's position is that to be credible and effective the FMCT should include appropriate verification arrangements. But as with any verification system it will be essential that FMCT verification provide confidence that Treaty commitments are being complied with. We look forward to hearing more detail of the US concerns during the planned visit to Geneva by US experts.

The form of FMCT verification would be among the matters to be negotiated but Australia has advanced the "focused approach" for FMCT verification which we consider could be both effective and cost-efficient. Under the "focused approach" verification measures would apply to fissile material – i.e. high enriched uranium and separated plutonium – produced after the treaty's entry into force, and to the facilities that produce fissile material, i.e. enrichment and reprocessing plants.

We are ready to work with the United States and others to ensure effective FMCT verification. But the first objective is securing a start to FMCT negotiations so that verification and other issues can be taken forward. It defies credibility that the widely-held aspiration for a Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty continues to be frustrated by the CD's failure to agree on a work program.

Mr President

The United States has also proposed a ban on the sale and export of persistent landmines.

Like many CD members Australia has obligations as a State Party to the Ottawa Convention and has enacted these prohibitions in national legislation. Australia continues to work with others to promote universalisation of the Convention, and to progress consideration of anti-vehicle mines in the CCW. We will need to take these efforts closely into account in considering the US proposal, particularly in addressing areas of potential duplication.