Mr President,

May I start by congratulating you on your assumption of the Presidency of the Conference and by thanking you for the energy you have already brought to your role. I assure you of Australia’s support during your Presidency.

Mr President,

The Conference starts its 2013 session with the outcomes of UNGA 67 First Committee fresh in all of our minds. As we all know, two key resolutions relevant to the work of this place were adopted late last year: resolutions 67/53 and 67/56.

The significance of these two resolutions lies not just in the fact that the General Assembly legislated for the establishment in Geneva of bodies to work on issues which this Conference has consistently failed to take forward.

Their significance also lies in the fact that they expressed the General Assembly’s continued view that this Conference still has an important role to play, if it chooses to take that opportunity.

As a supporter of the two resolutions, Australia intends to engage this year in the open-ended working group established under 67/56 and in the preparatory work for the group of government experts established under 67/53.

And as a supporter of the two resolutions, Australia also intends to engage in this Conference with the hope that it can make the right choice between opportunity and irrelevance.

The sands are shifting and we as the Member States of this Conference need to understand that and to act on it.

I thank you, Mr President.