



AUSTRALIA



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**UNGA 68 First Committee
21 October 2013**

Thematic statement on nuclear weapons

**Statement by Ambassador Peter Woolcott
Australian Permanent Representative to the United Nations, Geneva
and Ambassador for Disarmament**

Mr Chairman,

Australia is committed to the goal of a world free of nuclear weapons.

Achieving this goal will require sustained, high-level political will by all countries.

In this regard, we welcome the increased international interest in the past 12 months on nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. This has included the recent UN High-Level Meeting on Nuclear Disarmament, and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Article XIV meeting. It also includes the Oslo conference on humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons and the UN Open-Ended Working Group on Nuclear Disarmament.

However, there remains much work to be done and there are no easy solutions.

Mr Chairman,

One concrete step towards nuclear disarmament would be the entry into force of the **Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT)**. Australia, with fellow lead sponsors New Zealand and Mexico, is pleased to again present the annual resolution on the CTBT. This resolution stresses the vital importance and urgency of the Treaty's entry into force and, pending that entry into force, urges all States not to carry out nuclear-weapon test explosions. It is of serious concern that, while the CTBT has been valuable in imposing a strong international constraint against explosive nuclear weapons' testing, seventeen years after it opened for signature, it has still not entered into force. Australia welcomes the declaration by some States yet to ratify the CTBT of a moratorium on their nuclear testing. However, we call on those States yet to ratify the CTBT – particularly Annex 2 States – to do so as soon as possible. In the meantime, we encourage all Member States to support and co-sponsor this year's resolution.

Mr Chairman,

Nuclear disarmament is the responsibility of all States – although, understandably, States possessing nuclear arsenals have a particularly important role.

Australia welcomes the continuing discussions by the **five Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) nuclear-weapon States** on their nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation commitments. We urge them to continue working closely together to meet these commitments. In this regard, we welcome the proposal by US President Obama on 19 June in Berlin to negotiate further reductions of nuclear weapons. Australia strongly supports President Obama's intention to work with Russia on further nuclear weapons cuts, and encourages nuclear weapons States to engage constructively to build the trust necessary to further reduce their nuclear weapons arsenals.

We urge all States possessing nuclear weapons who are not yet engaged in nuclear disarmament efforts to make a political commitment not to increase their nuclear holdings and to start reducing their arsenals with the objective of their total elimination.

Mr Chairman,

The international community has long called for a treaty **banning the production of fissile material** for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices. Banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons purposes is not an end in itself but a vital step towards irreversible nuclear disarmament. Australia considers the negotiation and early conclusion of such a treaty long overdue and supports strongly efforts to commence negotiations on a fissile material ban treaty. Australia also welcomes the establishment of the Group of Governmental Experts to be convened in 2014 to make recommendations on the elements of such a treaty. Pending negotiations, Australia continues to advocate for a moratorium on the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons.

We will also continue to work within the **Conference on Disarmament** to get this body back to its intended function, a disarmament negotiating forum. It is time for all relevant States to harness the political will to see the CD quickly return to substantive work including negotiating a Fissile Material Cut-Off Treaty. In this regard, the establishment of an Informal Working Group on a Program of Work is a small, but necessary, step forward, and Australia will do its utmost to support this process.

Mr Chairman,

It is somewhat daunting to think that we are a mere one and a half years away from the **2015 NPT Review Conference**, with the last NPT Preparatory Committee meeting in this cycle only 6 months away. It is therefore imperative that all NPT States redouble their efforts to implement in full the 2010 NPT Action Plan – which was agreed by consensus – and work towards a successful conference in 2015.

Australia has been working closely with its partners in the **Non-Proliferation and Disarmament Initiative (NPDI)** to advocate implementation of the 2010 NPT outcomes. NPDI Ministers last met in New York on 24 September, and discussed the NPDI's on-

going activities, including specific actions in support of this objective. Australia was pleased to associate itself with the statement read by the Netherlands on behalf of the NPDI delivered during the recent UN High-Level Meeting on Nuclear Disarmament.

Mr Chairman,

Australia welcomes the continuing and tireless efforts of the Finnish facilitator Ambassador Jaakko Laajava and the NPT depository States – United States, United Kingdom and Russia – in consultation with the States of the Middle East region, for the convening of a conference on the establishment of a **Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction**. Australia strongly supports the establishment of such a zone as an important way to address regional concerns and insecurities, and to fulfil a key recommendation of the 2010 NPT Action Plan and its two accompanying decisions. We call upon all the relevant States to expedite their efforts, in a spirit of cooperation and flexibility, with a view to delivering substantive outcomes towards the convening of the International Conference at the earliest opportunity.

Mr Chairman,

Australia remains gravely concerned about the nuclear test conducted by the **Democratic People's Republic of Korea** on 12 February, and the DPRK's continuing nuclear weapon and ballistic missile development activities. These activities pose a threat to regional and international peace and security, and are in defiance of UN Security Council resolutions and the DPRK's other international obligations. We call on the DPRK to abide by all of its obligations, without conditions or delays, and also on the international community to assist in the enforcement of the relevant UNSC resolutions.

Australia also shares serious concerns about the possible military dimensions of **Iran's nuclear program**. It is incumbent on Iran to translate recent statements pledging cooperation and transparency into action, and address international concerns about its nuclear program by complying with binding UN Security Council resolutions and implementing IAEA requirements.

Mr Chairman,

Australia attaches great importance to the First Committee. It is a forum where we can harness positive developments, and build support for practical and concrete steps to strengthen efforts on nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. Only through such efforts will we achieve the shared goal of a world free of nuclear weapons.

Thank you.