

2012 Preparatory Committee Meeting for the 2015 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons

Cluster I Debate (Disarmament and Security Assurances)

Statement by Australia

Mr Chairman

The NPT is based on mutually reinforcing non-proliferation and disarmament obligations. Without the NPT, we would have seen many more countries developing nuclear arsenals – and far less progress on disarmament than what we have achieved.

We warmly welcome the entry into force last year of the US-Russian Treaty on Measures for the Further Reduction and Limitation of Strategic Offensive Arms – or New START – as well as the unilateral steps taken by the United Kingdom and France to reduce their nuclear arsenals.

These positive steps must be followed by continued and systematic reductions in all categories of nuclear weapons, as well as a diminishing of their role in national security strategies.

Mr Chairman

In July 2010, Australia and nine other countries established a new international group – called the Non-Proliferation and Disarmament Initiative (NPDI) – with one broad objective: to help take forward the 2010 NPT Review Conference Action Plan.

Among the NPDI's current priorities is to encourage greater transparency in nuclear disarmament. The 2010 Review Conference committed the NWS to make concrete progress towards nuclear disarmament and, under Action 21, encouraged them to agree on a standard nuclear disarmament reporting form as a transparency and confidence-building measure. Last year, the NPDI took the initiative of developing a draft reporting form and shared it with the NWS, as a contribution to their deliberations in meeting this objective. The NPDI has submitted the form to this PrepCom meeting as part of the general debate on nuclear disarmament.

We look forward to contributing further on nuclear disarmament transparency, as part of our efforts to encourage progress on this issue. All States Parties should report transparently on their efforts to implement the Treaty. Australia, in accordance with Action 20, has submitted to this PrepCom a comprehensive national report on our own implementation of the Action Plan and, through it, the NPT as a whole.

The NPDI is also dedicated to achieving a start to negotiations for a verifiable, irreversible treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons – an FMCT.

It is very disturbing to us that negotiations on an FMCT – enjoying near-universal support – have been stymied in the Conference on Disarmament (CD) for now over 15 years.

This year, NPDI members will convene experts' meetings to discuss technical issues relating to an FMCT and to feed into the CD's consideration of this important issue. Australia urges all NPT States Parties to support these meetings. The NPDI has also submitted a working paper on FMCT to this PrepCom.

In the meantime, we encourage all relevant states to refrain from the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons purposes.

Mr Chairman

Australia believes that, in addition to an irreversible and verifiable FMCT, entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) is a crucial intermediary step towards the goal of a world free of nuclear weapons.

Australia therefore congratulates Indonesia for its ratification of the CTBT in February this year. Indonesia's leadership sets an example to the eight remaining Annex 2 states whose ratifications are necessary for the Treaty's entry into force. We urge all states which have not yet signed and ratified the CTBT to do so without delay.

Meanwhile, it is vital that all nuclear-armed States maintain their moratoriums on nuclear testing. The Group stresses, however, that such moratoriums cannot serve as a substitute for ratifying the Test-Ban Treaty and that only the CTBT in force offers the global community the prospect of a permanent and legally binding commitment to end nuclear testing.

Mr Chairman

Australia would like to see stronger security assurances from NWS to non-nuclear-weapon States (NNWS), with fewer caveats than exist in current negative security assurances.

Australia welcomed the United States' declaration in its 2010 Nuclear Posture Review that it would not use or threaten to use nuclear weapons against NNWS that are in compliance with their NPT obligations. We encourage all NWS to make similar commitments.

In the meantime, Australia considers nuclear weapons-free zones to be important vehicles for providing negative security assurances to NNWS NPT states parties.

Mr Chairman

Nuclear disarmament cannot progress in a vacuum; it goes hand-in-hand with the strict adherence by all states to their non-proliferation obligations under the NPT.

The 2010 Review Conference final document has given us a valuable opportunity to strengthen the NPT regime for decades to come. At the start of this new NPT review cycle, I urge all states parties to continue working towards the comprehensive implementation of all Actions of the 2010 Action Plan.