



AUSTRALIAN MISSION TO THE UNITED NATIONS

E-mail [australia@un.int](mailto:australia@un.int)

150 East 42<sup>nd</sup> Street, New York NY 10017-5612 Ph 212 - 351 6600 Fax 212 - 351 6610 [www.AustraliaUN.org](http://www.AustraliaUN.org)

**First Committee**  
7 October 2010

## **General debate on all disarmament and international security agenda items**

**Statement by H.E. Gary Quinlan  
Ambassador and Permanent Representative  
of Australia to the United Nations**

(Check against delivery)

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Mr Chairman

Congratulations on your election to the Chairmanship of First Committee. You can be assured that Australia will continue to give a priority to the work done by this Committee to promote disarmament and international security issues. And that our delegation will work constructively with you and the Bureau to get results.

In particular we look forward – with Mexico - to supporting New Zealand in its leadership this year of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty resolution. We also look forward to supporting the Republic of Korea in its leadership of the resolution on preventing and combating illicit brokering activities. We invite the strongest possible support and sponsorship of these resolutions.

Mr Chairman

You take the Chair at a time when the mood for action on arms control issues is tangible and strong.

The reaffirmation by the NPT Review Conference in May of the NPT as the cornerstone of the nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation regimes - and its adoption by consensus of an action plan - was an historic achievement. The action plan is unprecedented in its scope and in its balance across the NPT's three pillars – disarmament, non-proliferation and the peaceful uses of nuclear energy.

We are encouraged in particular by the reaffirmed commitment by the Nuclear Weapon States at the Review Conference to reduce and eventually to eliminate all nuclear weapons.

As we look ahead over the next review cycle to 2015, we see the action plan as having significant value as a road map against which we can assess progress.

However, this work should not be left until the next Preparatory Committee meeting in 2012. Taking forward the action plan requires fresh thinking and dedication.

In response to this task, Australia and Japan have sought to generate momentum by bringing together a number of countries for this purpose - cross-regional in nature, diverse in perspectives and practical in focus. Each country has a strong commitment to nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation and to the NPT.

Ministers met for the first time on 22 September in New York, jointly convened by Australian and Japanese Foreign Ministers Rudd and Machara, and adopted a forward-looking statement with a clear view to give effect in practical ways to the Review Conference outcomes. The statement is available to delegations.

Mr Chairman

The successful outcome of the NPT Review Conference is of course but one strong and positive development in the field of international security.

Australia welcomes the signature by Russia and the United States of the New START agreement to further reduce their nuclear arsenals. We urge them to make every effort to achieve swift ratifications of the Treaty through their own domestic processes.

We urge all nuclear-armed states to follow the lead of Russia and the United States and commit to further, deeper, irreversible cuts in their nuclear arsenals. We applaud the commitments already made by France and the United Kingdom to reduce their arsenals.

Two weeks ago, here in New York, Australian Foreign Minister Rudd chaired the Ministerial Conference for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). The

meeting reconfirmed that the national security interests of all countries are enhanced by the CTBT coming into force.

Australia warmly welcomes the announcement by Indonesia, during the NPT Review Conference, that it is moving to ratify the CTBT. We are also encouraged by the US Administration's ongoing support for the CTBT, and its commitment to pursue US ratification.

Australia calls on all states which have not yet ratified the CTBT to do so without delay, and urges all CTBT signatories to support progress to complete the verification regimes.

Mr Chairman

On conventional weapons, Australia welcomes the entry into force of the Convention on Cluster Munitions, which is a significant humanitarian achievement. The first Meeting of States Parties, to be held in the Lao People's Democratic Republic next month, will lay the foundation for implementing the Convention. Australia has been honoured to work with the Lao PDR as a Friend of the President on the humanitarian focused issues of clearance and risk reduction education.

Australia also welcomes the commencement of UN-mandated negotiations on the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT), which is a key concern for states throughout the world. The reason is clear - the illicit and irresponsible trade of conventional arms has a direct and devastating impact on communities, undermining security and exacerbating conflict. The widespread availability and misuse of these weapons not only represents a security threat, but is also a crucial retarding factor on socio-economic development. We are deeply concerned about the devastating impact that armed violence and illicit conventional arms movements, particularly small arms and light weapons, have in undermining gains, including achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, and the severe impact on women, children and people with disabilities.

Australia has been playing a leading role in this process. We were pleased to have been a "Friend of the Chair" at the first meeting of the ATT Preparatory Committee in New York from 12 to 23 July.

It is early days but our assessment is that the meeting made genuine progress in examining the structure and prospective content of a comprehensive and effective treaty to establish an interim framework for the legitimate arms trade, and eradicate illicit trafficking.

Australia also contributed to building on the work of the Preparatory Committee by co-sponsoring with the Governments of Austria and Luxembourg the Boston Symposium on

the ATT last week. This was just one more step towards our goal – the conclusion of an Arms Trade Treaty in 2012.

Mr Chairman

Universal adherence to and full compliance with multilateral arms control regimes is fundamental to establishing the conditions for international peace and security. Australia supports the actions of the UN Security Council to address the proliferation and security challenges posed by Iran and the DPRK.

But Australia continues to remain concerned about the DPRK's nuclear activities, including its two announced nuclear tests in 2006 and 2009. The DPRK's pursuit of nuclear weapons poses a significant threat to regional and global stability and to international non-proliferation efforts.

We are also deeply concerned about Iran's failure to heed the calls of the United Nations Security Council, its continued failure to cooperate fully with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and troubling, unresolved questions about its nuclear activities. Iran's continued pursuit of sensitive nuclear capabilities in the face of repeated calls by the Security Council, leading to the imposition and tightening of sanctions, constitutes a direct nuclear proliferation and international security threat.

And Mr Chairman

Australia remains deeply dismayed by the continuing lack of progress in the Conference on Disarmament (CD). We welcome the initiative of Secretary-General Ban in convening the 24 September High-Level Meeting to help identify constructive means to restore to the CD its proper function – a negotiating body for international disarmament treaties.

As Australia's Foreign Minister Rudd said at that meeting – the CD's longstanding impasse is scandalous.

The CD needs to return to work. It should commence negotiations on a FMCT and substantive discussions on its other core issues.

And 15 years after the Shannon Mandate we cannot waver as to the value of the FMCT. The FMCT is a priority for Australia and an overwhelming majority of countries because on-going production of fissile material for weapons purposes is – unquestionably - a threat to international security. And because the FMCT is a physical precondition to reaching our collective goal of a world free of nuclear weapons.

While Australia would prefer to see FMCT negotiations take place in the CD, the fact is that the CD does not have a monopoly on such negotiations and that other treaties have been successfully negotiated outside the CD.

The CD is on notice – the clock is ticking. If the CD cannot return to work and sustain that work, we will need to consider other avenues for the FMCT.

Mr Chairman

Australia has re-energised our commitment to working with others to identify and promote practical, results-driven initiatives to promote non-proliferation and disarmament.

Of course, this is a complex and hard task. But that is simply a measure of how vital the objective is. It should never be the excuse not to try harder.

Thank You.

