



Statement for General Debate
Second Preparatory Committee for the 2020 Review
Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the
Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT)
Geneva, 23 April - 4 May 2018

Mr Chairman

In a deteriorating international security environment, it remains more vital than ever that we, the States Parties, affirm the NPT's centrality and continuously strengthen the NPT regime. Great power relations are at a low ebb, while regional issues pose a threat to global peace both in North Asia and in South Asia. In these periods of tension, we cannot let our differences frame our approach. We must instead focus on common ground and inclusive approaches.

Your valuable outreach across regions, Mr Chairman, has highlighted the Treaty's enduring relevance to global peace and security. We look forward to working with you to maximise progress at this important Preparatory Committee session midway through the 2020 review cycle.

Mr Chairman

Australia remains a proud and active participant in two broad cross-regional groups of states working to promote and

strengthen the NPT, including through advocacy of the 2010 NPT Action Plan: the Non-Proliferation and Disarmament Initiative (NPDI) and the Vienna Group of 10. These groupings continue to illustrate that diversity across states is an asset which need not impede progress towards shared goals. This is a valuable lesson as we commence this meeting's work.

Improving transparency on the implementation of NPT commitments is one area of focus which would benefit all three NPT pillars, especially disarmament, and we commend the NPDI working paper on this issue.

Another cross-cutting area which warrants renewed attention is strengthening the NPT review process. How can we best ensure that our review efforts are effectively and efficiently focused so as to optimise substantive outcomes? We look forward to working with partners on advancing this important agenda.

In this respect, we are happy to see the awareness of the need of gender perspectives and equal representation increasing within the NPT, and the disarmament and non-proliferation field in general. I hope that everyone wondering to themselves what gender has to do with the NPT will join us at Wednesday's breakfast meeting, hosted by Australia, Canada, the Netherlands and Sweden.

Mr Chairman

In relation to the NPT's disarmament pillar, Australia maintains its strong and long-standing commitment to the elimination of nuclear weapons, an objective shared by all NPT states parties.

Australia is realistic about the challenges of achieving significant disarmament in today's environment. But there are practical steps we can and should take now to help build trust, to bring countries together to build a stronger basis for future progress.

Non-nuclear weapon states can play an important role in building trust, fostering dialogues and engaging in cooperative initiatives with each other and with nuclear weapon states.

But we urge nuclear weapons states themselves to take the lead in demonstrating concrete results on nuclear disarmament. The current focus could usefully be on strategic stability, de-escalation and risk reduction, laying the ground for future reductions in nuclear weapon holdings. We were pleased with the useful exchanges on nuclear risk reduction in the UN Disarmament Commission which completed its first year of the new cycle last week. As Chair of the UNDC, we think an outcome on risk reduction would be a positive contribution to the 2020 NPT Review Conference.

One of the best ways to build trust for future disarmament is for nuclear weapons states and non-nuclear weapons states to work together.

For example, detailed work on elements for a future Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty will make a substantive contribution to future negotiations.

Likewise, serious work on nuclear disarmament verification is essential.

Mr Chairman

Turning now to the NPT's non-proliferation pillar, preventing nuclear proliferation is as important now as it was when the NPT was concluded. The Treaty – and the confidence and assurances it delivers – can never be taken for granted. New efforts are necessary to seek practical ways to build the confidence and trust that is also necessary to underpin non-proliferation assurances.

Key contemporary proliferation challenges include the DPRK and Iran.

The DPRK's development of nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles, and its proliferation of sensitive technologies, form an unacceptable challenge to the nuclear non-proliferation framework.

In relation to Iran, in our view it is in the interests of the international community for all parties to adhere to their commitments under the Joint Comprehensive Program of Action (JCPOA). The JCPOA remains the best available mechanism to assure the international community of Iran's commitment to conducting an entirely peaceful nuclear program.

We must ensure that safeguards regimes remain strong, trusted and appropriately resourced. Australia continues to offer its strong support to the crucial safeguards work of the IAEA, as well as the importance of all states concluding the IAEA Additional Protocol.

The Comprehensive Nuclear Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) is a fundamental element of the nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament architecture and we note the continuing importance of making substantive progress in working towards and supporting entry into force of the CTBT. We look forward to commencing a conversation on provisional application of substantive CTBT provisions with states parties.

In another WMD context, the abhorrent recent use of chemical weapons in Syria, Malaysia and the UK has underlined the need for vigilance on compliance with treaty obligations and accountability for violation of international laws.

Mr Chairman

The promise of the NPT's pillar on the peaceful uses of nuclear energy is evident from its relevance to no fewer than nine of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals.

We look forward to continuing to collaborate in this and other forums on a range of initiatives to ensure that non-nuclear weapon states continue to reap the benefits of peaceful uses of nuclear energy.

Given our shared interests in this cornerstone treaty, let's seize the opportunity offered by this meeting to address challenges facing the NPT, and maintain and extend its extraordinary benefits.

Thank you Mr Chairman.

