



AUSTRALIA



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UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY FIRST COMMITTEE 12 October 2015

General Debate

Statement by Senator Barry O'Sullivan

Mr Chairman

I congratulate you on your election as Chair of the First Committee during its 70th session. I assure you of my delegation's strong support for your work.

As this Committee begins its formal proceedings we ought to pause to reflect upon what we are trying to achieve. We have a shared goal of a world whose peoples live in peace, security and prosperity. That goal may seem a long way off if we focus solely on current and serious challenges like ongoing tensions over Ukraine and in the Middle East, in particular the dreadful conflict and suffering arising from the struggle against Daesh in Syria and Iraq. Our shared disarmament objectives may also seem a long way off following the inability of this year's NPT Review Conference to agree on a consensus outcome, and the continuing stasis in the Conference on Disarmament. But if we are to realise our collective ambition of enhancing global security and stability, we must re-commit ourselves to the

painstaking work of practical nuclear disarmament and confidence-building measures that engage all States concerned.

There are some grounds for cautious optimism. The Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, if fully implemented, will reassure the global community of the exclusively peaceful nature of Iran's nuclear program. Australia applauds the efforts of Iran, the United States, the UK, Russia, Germany, France, China and the EU in reaching this agreement, and strongly supports the role of the International Atomic Energy Agency in monitoring and verifying its implementation.

Mr Chairman

Australia has a long history of advocating practical and realistic approaches towards disarmament: our objectives are not only humanitarian but also to enhance the security of all States. Thus we argue that disarmament which leads to our collective goal of a world without nuclear weapons must involve all States, including those possessing nuclear weapons. And the building blocks of nuclear disarmament remain as important as ever.

These building blocks include the entry into force of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, which opened for signature nearly 20 years ago. In the lead-up to the 20th anniversary of this treaty in September 2016 we should make a concerted effort to encourage those remaining Annex II States whose ratification is needed for entry into force, to ratify as soon as possible. Just one more Annex II State signing on to the CTBT or ratifying it will make a significant contribution towards strengthening the global norm against nuclear testing.

The General Assembly has long recognised the need for a legally binding and effectively verifiable ban on the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons and other nuclear explosive devices. Australia warmly welcomes the recent report of the Group of Governmental Experts established to explore aspects of a treaty on fissile material. We urge States to consider this report and find ways to move forward on negotiating a fissile material cut-off treaty, including within and on the margins of the Conference on Disarmament.

States must be able to verify the claims of others that they have actually eradicated their arsenals, so we welcome efforts to develop better ways to verify the dismantling and eradication of nuclear warheads. Australia is pleased to be part of the US-led International Partnership for Nuclear Disarmament Verification, and to be co-chairing with Poland a working group on On-Site Inspections. These are practical and important steps for getting us closer to verifiable global zero.

Australia welcomes the statement delivered by Japan on behalf of the Non-Proliferation and Disarmament Initiative or NPDI and will continue to contribute actively on disarmament, both nationally and through our membership to the NPDI. More needs to be done, especially by the nuclear weapon states. For example, the NPDI strongly advocates greater transparency by nuclear weapon states, both to better gauge their progress in meeting disarmament commitments and to build confidence to enable further progress in nuclear disarmament. The NPDI continues to call upon nuclear weapon states to commit to a detailed, annual standard reporting form, and to continuously improve the transparency of information provided.

Adopting the high moral ground on nuclear weapons is not enough to achieve practical outcomes on disarmament. For example, a treaty banning nuclear weapons will not lead to nuclear armed states giving up their arsenals. We have to accept that the hard practical work necessary to bring us closer to a world free of nuclear weapons must still be done. There are no short cuts. When the world has eliminated nuclear weapons, some sort of international legal instrument may be necessary to ensure this process is not reversed, but a treaty now would not help us get to that place.

While the 2015 NPT Review Conference was unable to produce a consensus outcome, this does not mean we need to be resigned to five years of minimal ambition before the next Review Conference. Previous consensus outcomes of the NPT, including the final documents of the 2000 and 2010 Review Conferences, and most importantly, the 2010 Action Plan remain valid.

Mr Chairman

We were pleased to see the Arms Trade Treaty enter into force on 24 December 2014. We acknowledge and warmly appreciate the intensive follow-up efforts of many, in particular Mexico as host of the recent First Conference of State Parties in Cancun. We now look forward to seeing the tangible benefits from better regulation of the arms trade and the attendant reduction in the risk of weapons being diverted to terrorist and criminal groups. Australia is dedicated to supporting the universalisation and implementation of Treaty, and in particular to promoting adherence to the Treaty in our own region. We also remain committed to universalisation of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention and the Convention on Cluster Munitions.

Australia is deeply concerned about ongoing reports of chemical weapons use in Syria and Iraq. We call on the international community to redouble efforts to completely eliminate remaining chemical weapons stockpiles and production capabilities; to prevent the acquisition, production and use of chemical weapons; and to hold perpetrators accountable. Australia welcomes the adoption of UNSC Resolution 2235 (2015) because it sends a strong unified message to treaty violators. Australia will continue working with others to ensure the realisation of these objectives. One particular concern is the use of aerosolised chemicals which affect the central nervous system in law enforcement scenarios.

Mr Chairman

Australia welcomes the continuing attention paid to the issue of space and cyber over the past year. We welcome the report of the Group of Governmental Experts (GGE) on Developments in the Field of Information and Telecommunications in the Context of International Security. We are pleased that the Group was able to extend its consideration of the issues beyond international law into norms for responsible State behaviour. The report's eleven voluntary, non-binding norms, together with the Group's comments on how international law applies to the use of ICTs, are a substantive and useful contribution to member State guidance in this complex area. We look forward to engaging closely on this issue in the coming months.

The safety, security and sustainability of the space environment should be a higher priority for the international community, given our increasing reliance on space for our prosperity and development. Australia places a

premium on practical and near-term steps to protect every nation's access to the space environment. We see transparency and confidence building measures, such as those contained in the draft International Code of Conduct for Outer Space Activities, as an important contribution to space security, including in addressing the pressing issue of space debris.

Mr Chairman

Australians have a reputation as pragmatists, not ideologues, and we remain committed to playing our part and working constructively and with determination with others to achieve our shared goal of enhancing global security and stability through the work of this important committee.

Thank you.