NPT Preparatory Committee
29 April 2019

General Debate

Statement by Amanda Gorely, First Assistant Secretary, International Security Division, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

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Thank you Chair

The 50th anniversary of the NPT gives us pause to reflect on the enduring relevance of the Treaty to global peace and security.

Our collective commitment to the Treaty has prevented a global nuclear arms race and contained nuclear weapons proliferation. The NPT has strengthened the ‘taboo’ against nuclear weapons use and established the powerful framework for working towards the elimination of nuclear weapons. The NPT brings enormous benefits to humanity through international cooperation on peaceful uses of nuclear energy, science, and technology.

There can be no doubt about the NPT’s value. We all have an interest in a strong and effective Treaty across its three pillars.
For Australia, a core objective is to strengthen the NPT. In a more contested and competitive international security environment, this is no easy task. The NPT faces challenges over differences about the most effective path towards disarmament.

Chair

The DPRK’s nuclear and ballistic missile programs challenge the NPT, global and regional security. Australia is committed to the complete, verifiable and irreversible denuclearisation of North Korea, as required by multiple UNSC resolutions. We welcome all efforts at dialogue. But, Australia will maintain pressure on North Korea until it takes concrete steps to denuclearise.

Australia considers continued compliance by Iran with the JCPOA as critical in providing assurances to the international community about the nature of its nuclear program.

Australia supports a progressive approach to nuclear disarmament that is both practical and realistic. This includes concrete steps such as the entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty; commencing negotiations for a Fissile Material Cut-Off Treaty; developing robust techniques for verifying disarmament commitments; and ensuring that safeguards regimes remain strong and appropriately resourced to underpin our shared non-proliferation objectives. We see scope for further collaborative work to reduce nuclear risks.
Central to this, is the view that to advance nuclear disarmament, we must take into account security concerns, and engage the NPT Nuclear Weapons States to persuade them to reduce and ultimately eliminate their arsenals. In this regard, an extension to the NewSTART agreement would be a significant contribution. We are realistic in acknowledging that all countries have specific security perspectives. In moving forward in an effective way on further arms reductions, we must address these concerns. We welcome the dialogue proposed by the US on ‘Creating the Environment for Nuclear Disarmament’.

Australia is a proud and active participant in cross-regional groups working to strengthen the NPT, including the Non-Proliferation and Disarmament Initiative and the Vienna Group of 10. These groups illustrate that diversity across States is an asset which offers practical ways forward for the NPT community. I commend to you working papers from these groups, including on transparency and strengthening the NPT review process.

Chair

Australia welcomes your intention to propose recommendations and deal with necessary and important procedural matters at this Conference. We support your efforts to take a decision to appoint the Review Conference Chair so he can do the critical groundwork for a successful Review Conference in 2020 – which is in all of our interests.
Chair

Australia supports the full participation and leadership of women and men in all three NPT pillars. Despite gradual improvement in women’s leadership and participation in the Review Process, gender disparity is still pronounced. We encourage delegates to attend the side-event on making participation meaningful, and to reflect on the ideas proposed in working papers on these topics.

The NPT underpins efforts to ensure the benefits of nuclear energy and technology are shared among States to the betterment of humanity. All NPT States have the right to develop, research, produce and use nuclear energy. They also need to apply the highest standards of safety, security, and safeguards.

As a founding member of the IAEA and a member of the IAEA Board of Governors, Australia supports the Agency’s essential role in facilitating collaboration between States, to harness the peaceful uses of nuclear energy while simultaneously safeguarding against nuclear proliferation.

Chair

The NPT is a common good. It deserves to be nurtured, supported and strengthened. As we look ahead to the NPT’s next 50 years, Australia will continue to be active and pragmatic in seeking out common ground and creative ways forward.
Thank you