Australia

UNGA First Committee – Thematic Debate

Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament

Next year’s NPT Review Conference will have the task of setting the future nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament agenda.

Australia is convinced that a strong and effective NPT is essential to preventing the spread of nuclear weapons, further progress towards nuclear disarmament and retention of the climate of confidence necessary for cooperation in the peaceful uses of nuclear energy.

We are committed to working with others to address the serious challenges faced by the Treaty. Events since we last met have confirmed that existing NPT verification is insufficient to stop determined proliferators. There should be no doubt that the Additional Protocol together with a comprehensive safeguards agreement is the NPT safeguards verification standard required for NPT non-nuclear weapon states. NPT parties should at next year’s Review Conference take a decision to this effect.

The risk of NPT parties misusing the Treaty’s peaceful nuclear energy provisions in order to acquire the technical basis for a rapid breakout to nuclear weapons is a serious matter for the international community. The Review Conference will need to take forward the international dialogue on ways to limit the spread of sensitive nuclear technology. As noted in our General Debate statement, this is not a question of reinterpreting the NPT but of ensuring that actions by NPT parties are true to the Treaty’s intent and to the global non-proliferation norm.

We should be clear about what is at stake. The non-proliferation regime provides vital security benefits. But more than this, dealing with nuclear proliferation is fundamental to the goal of nuclear disarmament. It is simply not possible to conceive of a world free of nuclear weapons in the absence of complete and permanent assurances of nuclear non-proliferation.

Australia remains strongly committed to progress on nuclear disarmament and is pleased again to co-sponsor Japan’s resolution on “A Path to the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons”.

We strongly support the CTBT and are actively pursuing further signatures and ratifications. With Japan, Finland and the Netherlands we were pleased earlier at this General Assembly to convene a joint ministerial meeting which underscored that support for the CTBT remains widespread and resolute. Australia is pleased also to be lead co-sponsor with New Zealand and Mexico of the draft CTBT resolution. We hope this resolution will again attract overwhelming support.

We remain of the view that a Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty would significantly advance global nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation goals. We stand ready to work to achieve a start to FMCT negotiations and to ensure an effective cut-off treaty, including appropriate verification.
Mr Chairman

In this Committee we must ensure our efforts are focused on making a practical contribution to the international community's efforts to progress nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. Australia looks forward to joining with other delegations in supporting resolutions that serve this purpose.