First Committee
14 October 2005

Statement on the draft resolution ‘Prevention of the illicit transfer and unauthorized access to and use of manportable air defence systems’.

Statement by Craig Maclachlan
Deputy Permanent Representative
of Australia to the Conference on Disarmament

(Check against delivery)

Mr Chairman

Greatly encouraged by the consensus adoption in the First Committee of UNGA 59 of the resolution on the “Prevention of the Ilicit Transfer and Unauthorized Access to and Use of Man-Portable Air Defence Systems (MANPADS),” Australia, with the sponsorship of Argentina, Kenya, Thailand and Turkey, is re-introducing this resolution, with updates.

The threat to international security and civil aviation in particular, by terrorist acquisition and use of MANPADS remains undiminished. The potential costs in the loss of innocent lives and in economic terms demands national action and international cooperation.

The resolution encourages member states to take concrete steps to exercise effective control to prevent MANPADS falling into the hands of non-State end-users. In addition to stockpile security and transfers, including of components, we encourage member states to incorporate controls over training and instruction materials which may assist non-state actors in their use of these weapons.

An additional element in the draft resolution acknowledges the role of unauthorised transfer of materials and information in assisting illicit manufacturing of MANPADS. This reflects the importance of effective controls over illicit manufacturing of small arms.
and light weapons, such as MANPADS, to combating illicit transfers. Delegations will recall that this was a vital element of the Programme of Action on Small Arms and Light Weapons we agreed in 2001.

The resolution safeguards authorised trade between Governments - we recognise that MANPADS are a legitimate weapons system in authorized hands. The resolution is a response to the increasing international concern about the potential use of these weapons by terrorist groups, especially the risk they pose to civil aviation.

The resolution recognises the importance of information exchange and transparency in the trade of MANPADS to build confidence and security among states. It complements the First Committee's omnibus small arms resolution and supports the Committee's goal to address contemporary security concerns. Australia also welcomes progress achieved at the Second Biennial Meeting of States to the Programme of Action, including on the illicit proliferation of small arms and light weapons.

The resolution takes a practical approach. For States requesting assistance, it encourages initiatives to mobilize resources and technical expertise to assist in enhancing national controls and stockpile management practices.

We note the considerable efforts of others in controlling illicit transfers of MANPADS. In this regard Australia welcomes the complementary work of the International Civil Aviation Organization, including Resolution A35-11 addressing the specific threat posed by MANPADS, and the establishment of a secure website for the exchange of information on MANPADS.

Mr Chairman,

Australia is grateful for the useful comments and suggestions received to date on the draft resolution. The text has been adjusted to take into account views provided during informal consultations. We consider the text now strikes a good balance between preventing the proliferation and unauthorized use of MANPADS, and the rights of Governments to possess and to trade in MANPADS with other Governments in the interests of their national security.

Australia encourages delegations to support again this important resolution.