First Committee
6 October 2005

General Debate Statement

Statement by HE Mr John Dauth
Ambassador and Permanent Representative
of Australia to the United Nations

(Check against delivery)

Mr Chairman.

The Australian delegation congratulates you on your appointment as Chair of this committee. We look forward to working closely with you over the coming weeks.

My delegation also wishes to express our deepest sympathies to the Government and people of Indonesia for the terrorist attacks in Bali last weekend. These terrible events are a reminder of the continuing threat from terrorism to us all.

Mr Chairman

One year ago, we looked to two major opportunities — the NPT Review Conference and the UN Summit — to make our world more secure through action on non-proliferation and disarmament.

Today, however, we must acknowledge that the international community squandered those two opportunities. The failure to strengthen efforts against WMD proliferation is a particular concern given what we know to be terrorists’ desire to acquire and use such weapons.
We should be quite clear – multilateral processes cannot waste opportunities in this way and remain a viable option for addressing contemporary security threats. The stakes are too high for political point scoring and posturing.

Australia supports strongly multilateral approaches to non-proliferation, arms control and disarmament. Treaties such as the NPT and measures like UNSCR 1540 are fundamental to the norms of WMD non-proliferation and disarmament. At the recent UN Summit, Australia participated in the Norwegian initiative to promote an outcome on non-proliferation and disarmament. But the disappointments of this year have underscored the importance of pragmatic measures which complement broader multilateral efforts.

For this reason, Australia – along with over 60 other countries – is engaged fully in the Proliferation Security Initiative to disrupt and deter illicit WMD-related shipments. And as chair of the Australia Group – now in its twentieth year – we are working to ensure effective controls on chemical and biological agents to prevent their misuse.

Mr Chairman

There is an opportunity for this committee to follow the example of such practical initiatives. Indeed, the adoption by consensus last year of a resolution on preventing the illicit transfer and use of MANPADS showed this committee can respond to contemporary security concerns. We will reintroduce a MANPADS resolution this year.

As this committee implements the reforms agreed last year, we should focus on those practical efforts we can make to strengthen international security. Australia has long advocated measures such as the Additional Protocol, a fissile material cut off treaty and the Hague Code of Conduct as practical steps against proliferation of WMD and their means of delivery. Last month in New York, we showed our commitment to the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty’s entry into force as President of the CTBT Article XIV Conference. And we support international efforts, including adoption of a marking and tracking instrument and work towards an arms trade treaty, to curb the uncontrolled proliferation of small arms and light weapons.

Mr Chairman

The Australian delegation will work constructively with you and others in exploring these and other issues in the thematic debate. By doing so, we hope this committee can become a more effective vehicle for promoting practical measures to address emerging and existing threats to international security.