Mr Chairman, Australia is committed to the goal of a world free of nuclear weapons and has a history of practical and determined activism in support and promotion of this goal.

The Australian Prime Minister, Ms Gillard, reaffirmed Australia’s commitment to this goal in her address to the General Assembly last month, as did the Australian Parliament when it passed a bipartisan motion on nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament in March this year.

Australia attaches great importance to the First Committee as a forum where we can build support for practical and concrete steps to strengthen efforts in the field of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation.

In this regard, Australia is pleased to be presenting with our fellow lead sponsors New Zealand and Mexico the annual resolution “Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty”. This resolution stresses the vital importance and urgency of the Treaty’s entry into force and, pending that entry into force, urges all States not to carry out nuclear-weapon test explosions. It has enjoyed strong support and we are grateful to the 75 other Member States which have to date co-sponsored this year’s resolution including several States that are cosponsoring for the first time. It is of course an issue of serious concern that, sixteen years after it opened for signature, the CTBT has not yet entered into force. We call on those States yet to ratify the CTBT – particularly Annex 2 States – to do so as soon as possible. In the meantime, we encourage all Member States to support and co-sponsor this year’s resolution.

Mr Chairman,

Australia is under no illusion about the complexity and difficulty of achieving our shared goal of a world free of nuclear weapons. All of us – NPT States parties as well as those States still outside the NPT – have an opportunity and an obligation to keep moving towards that goal, an opportunity we must seize. But there are no easy solutions.
Australia is encouraged by the ongoing discussions by the five nuclear-weapon States on their nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation commitments. We look forward to positive and concrete results from their individual and collective efforts in implementing their obligations under the 2010 NPT Review Conference’s consensus Action Plan.

Australia also welcomes the continuing efforts of the Finnish facilitator Ambassador Jaakko Laajava and the NPT depository States – United States, United Kingdom and Russia – in consultation with the States of the Middle East region, for the convening of a conference in 2012 on the establishment of a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction. We urge all relevant States to continue to cooperate constructively in this endeavour.

But of course, implementing the Action Plan is not the work and responsibility of a limited number of NPT States parties, but of all NPT States parties. True - the five nuclear-weapon States have a special responsibility under the NPT, but Australia also encourages all NPT States parties to carry a collective notion of responsibility for Action Plan implementation through the Preparatory Committee process into the 2015 Review Conference.

For our part, Australia continues to work hard to take forward the consensus outcomes of the 2010 NPT Review Conference, and in this regard, we presented to the first session of the Preparatory Committee to the 2015 NPT Review Conference held in Vienna earlier this year a detailed report of our efforts to date to implement the 2010 NPT Review Conference.

Mr Chairman,

In addition to our national efforts, Australia is also working with the Non-Proliferation and Disarmament Initiative (NPDI). NPDI Ministers last met in New York on 26 September, and in their declaration outlined the NPDI’s on-going activities, including specific actions in support of the implementation of the 2010 NPT Action Plan. Australia is pleased to associate itself the statement read by Turkey on behalf of the NPDI.

Mr Chairman,

One of Australia’s key interests is to see States act on the international community’s longstanding calls for a treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices: we consider the negotiation and early conclusion of such a treaty long overdue. Banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons purposes is not an end itself but a vital step towards irreversible nuclear disarmament.

It is more than lamentable that seventeen years after the Shannon Report and the mandate contained therein, the Conference on Disarmament still has not begun negotiations on a treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices. Over the past two years, Australia, Japan, Germany and the Netherlands have made practical steps to inform the CD’s work, such as through experts side events on this issue. At this First Committee, Australia strongly supports Canada’s
efforts through its annual resolution to move substantive work forward on this issue; we strongly encourage others to support Canada’s efforts and initiative.

We will continue to support the negotiation and early conclusion of a treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices. It is part of the deal from 2010 and part of the picture mapped out in the Final Document of SSOD I. In the meantime, we call on all relevant States to maintain moratoria on the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices or else to stop production and implement moratoria.

Mr Chairman,

Australia remains gravely concerned about the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea’s continuing nuclear weapon and ballistic missile activities, including the launch in April of a long-range missile, in defiance of UN Security Council resolutions and its other international obligations. DPRK’s pursuit of these capabilities poses a significant threat to the stability of our own region, the Asia-Pacific, and to the non-proliferation efforts of the international community.

Australia also shares serious concerns about the mounting evidence of the possible military dimensions of Iran’s nuclear program. Iran continues to defy binding UN Security Council resolutions and IAEA requirements.

There is no ambiguity about what DPRK and Iran each need to do to resolve these matters and to restore the international community’s confidence – comply with obligations.

Mr Chairman,

It is important that we harness positive developments in disarmament and non-proliferation, and build on these to achieve the shared goal of a world free of nuclear weapons. The current NPT review cycle is nearing its mid-point. So this is not a time for complacency. There remains much work to be done within the context of the NPT, but also – let us never forget – by those States outside the NPT which possess nuclear weapons. We should all focus on practical and positive efforts which keep us moving forward.