UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY
10 October 2017

First Committee – General Debate

Statement by Mr. Ian McConville
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Chair

I congratulate you on your election as Chair. Please be assured of my delegation’s strong support for your work.

Our shared goal remains a world where people can live in peace, security and prosperity.

Global tensions and regional conflicts, and other challenges such as terrorism and malicious cyber incidents, all contribute to a deteriorating international security environment.

Chair

Australia remains deeply concerned at further violations of the Chemical Weapons Convention. We must do more to defend this key international norm.

Australia calls on all States Parties to strongly support the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons in establishing an attribution mechanism on Syria, and developing a
global attribution capacity. Such mechanisms send a clear message – that users of chemical weapons will be held to account. Identifying perpetrators is a crucial, necessary step; as is potentially deterring others who might consider using such reprehensible weapons.

We remain committed to strengthening the Biological Weapons Convention and welcomed constructive discussions and ideas generated during the series of Experts Meetings in August.

Chair

Australia remains committed to the ultimate goal of a world without nuclear weapons.

In a more complex and uncertain security climate, disarmament is more difficult yet no less necessary. We remain convinced that patience, pragmatism and practicality – a “progressive approach” – is the most sustainable and realistic way forward.

Progress needs painstaking effort – on disarmament verification; on a treaty banning production of fissile material for nuclear weapons; on increasing transparency and other risk reduction measures; and on strengthening the norm against nuclear testing through the entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). We encourage states to sponsor this year’s CTBT resolution, which we are running with our partners Mexico and New Zealand.

The Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty continues to deliver. It enables access to nuclear technology for peaceful purposes. It constrains nuclear proliferation. And it provides the framework for nuclear disarmament.

The 2020 Review Conference, marking the Treaty’s first half-century in force, is a golden opportunity to reflect on the past and on how we can strengthen future implementation.
Our common interests in strengthening the NPT greatly outweigh our differences.

With our cross-regional partners in the Non-Proliferation and Disarmament Initiative, Australia looks forward to developing a convergence of views for the 2020 NPT RevCon.

We welcome significant efforts this year at dialogue on the nuclear program of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, and look forward to those efforts yielding positive, concrete results.

Turning to Iran, we want the JCPOA to remain in effect, and call on Iran and all remaining parties to remain in compliance. It is in our collective interests that controls on Iran’s nuclear programme remain in place.

Chair

On conventional weapons, a key Australian focus is to strengthen implementation and universalisation of important treaties including the Arms Trade Treaty, particularly in the Asia-Pacific.

At the recent ATT Conference of States Parties, we facilitated discussions on the critical issue of diversion of conventional weapons.

In coming years, emerging technologies will present new challenges. That is why we value global conversations on lethal autonomous weapons systems and small arms and light weapons.

Chair

The scourge of terrorism remains a global challenge.
While Da’esh has lost almost all the territory it once held, it retains fighters capable of waging an insurgency, and its ability to inspire attacks has implications for our region’s security.

We welcomed the General Assembly’s consensus adoption in June of the biennial Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy Review Resolution.

A multi-faceted approach is required, which starts by addressing the drivers of violent extremism, a key theme within the Strategy.

Australia’s economic and security interests in space are expanding, based on increasing space-based and space-enabled capabilities.

The new Australian Space Agency aims to support space industry growth. Australia is committed to strengthening norms of responsible behaviour, and the international rules and laws for space.

Australia is working with international partners to reinforce the rules-based order in cyberspace through an international cyber stability framework of existing international law, agreed voluntary norms of responsible state behaviour, deterrence, confidence-building measures, and coordinated capacity-building.

Australia strongly supports the continuation of expert discussion in the UN on international cyber issues. The UN Group of Governmental Experts (UNGGE) was the forum that first agreed that existing international law and norms of responsible state behaviour apply in cyberspace, and it is vital that these discussion continue. Australia calls on all countries to work constructively to promote and protect a peaceful and stable online environment, on which we all ultimately depend.

We welcome the increased use this year of disarmament forums for important substantive discussions on a range of issues, including nuclear risk reduction.
Australia was pleased to have chaired this year the UN Disarmament Commission, which laid the groundwork for a consensus 2020 outcome. And we welcome the Conference on Disarmament’s adoption by consensus of four Subsidiary Body reports.

Australia champions full participation by both women and men in international security forums.

The Secretary-General’s *Agenda for Disarmament* is a useful initiative, providing a broad menu of options for consideration and underlining the importance of dialogue and trust-building.

Chair

Across these fields, Australia remains committed to playing its part by working constructively and collaboratively towards our shared goal of enhancing global security and stability through this committee’s important work.

Thank you.