At this conference we have heard chilling testimony from the hibakusha of how the Hiroshima and Nagasaki detonations have destroyed countless lives over generations. This conference and many studies have painted a clear picture of the terrible impact on humanity of a nuclear exchange. This conference places the horrific impact of nuclear weapons use, or an accidental detonation, squarely before the global public.

These concerns are why we have long taken a prominent and active role promoting nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. These humanitarian concerns underpin everything we do on disarmament and non-proliferation. But our view is that simply banning nuclear weapons will not guarantee their dismantlement and elimination. Effective disarmament must also engage the nuclear-armed states substantively and constructively.

A global ban on the production, possession, storage and use of nuclear weapons is an ideal goal, but practical steps to achieve total disarmament also require continued efforts by the existing non-proliferation and disarmament regime, including the NPT, and also including the Non-Proliferation and Disarmament Initiative, where Australia, together with Mexico, Japan and other countries, is working to bring about implementation of an action plan agreed at the 2010 NPT Review Conference.

The fact is nuclear weapons exist, and some states possess them for what they see as security requirements. Therefore, the global community needs to achieve a situation where nuclear-armed states and those that rely on their nuclear umbrella feel more secure without nuclear weapons than with them.

I would like to extend to Mexico our gratitude for hosting this conference and thank the state of Nayarit for providing such a beautiful location.

Statement delivered by Richard Mathews, Director, Nuclear Policy Section, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade