Statement for Cluster III (Peaceful uses of nuclear energy)

Second Preparatory Committee for the 2020 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT)

Geneva, 23 April - 4 May 2018

Mr Chairman

The NPT underpins realisation of the vast and diverse benefits of nuclear energy. It ensures benefits can be developed and shared among States to the betterment of humanity, and for social and economic development. The links to no fewer than nine of the seventeen Sustainable Development Goals attest to the critical role that peaceful uses of nuclear energy have in taking forward development outcomes.

Today the benefits of the peaceful use and application of nuclear energy are enjoyed across almost every aspect of human endeavour –
including through practical contributions to combatting drought and disease, improving human and animal health and agricultural outcomes.

Mr Chairman

Australia remains steadfast in our view that all NPT States party have an inalienable right to develop, research, produce and use nuclear energy as set out in Article IV of the Treaty and in keeping with Articles I, II, and III.

Australia, as a founding member of the IAEA, has been a strong supporter of the Agency’s essential role including through the Technical Cooperation Program to facilitate collaboration between States, in order to harness the peaceful uses of nuclear energy while simultaneously safeguarding against nuclear proliferation.

Australia welcomes the continued high level attention on nuclear applications including through the forthcoming IAEA Ministerial Conference scheduled for November this year (2018).
In keeping with our strong commitment to the objectives of the TC program, Australia takes pride in the fact we pay our target contributions in full and on time. As a friend of ReNuAL, Australia has also made voluntary contributions totalling €600,000 in recent years, through the Peaceful Uses Initiative, to support modernisation of the IAEA’s nuclear applications laboratories.

Mr Chairman

The entry into force in June last year (2017) of an indefinite extension to the Regional Cooperative Agreement (RCA) between 22 Member States in the Asia-Pacific region, including Australia, reflects this agreement’s longstanding success - since the 1970s - in underpinning regional cooperation in nuclear science and technology in Australia’s most immediate region.

As a country with a significant nuclear science base and as a major supplier of uranium for peaceful purposes, Australia supports the further expansion of peaceful uses of nuclear energy,
under conditions where the highest standards of safeguards, safety and security are observed.

We also welcome the IAEA’s development of instruments, standards and codes of conduct, which are key mechanisms through which to engage the peaceful application of nuclear energy and techniques while ensuring human safety and security and environmental protection.

Mr Chairman

Australia is proud of its excellent safety and security record, which attests to our dedicated efforts to live by the standards set by the international community - including through adherence to the various international conventions to which we are party. We apply the IAEA’s safety and security standards and welcome regular peer review by the IAEA in a spirit of transparency and continual improvement.

In 2017 Australia hosted an International Physical Protection Advisory Service (IPPAS) follow up mission, and work is well underway in advance of our second full-scope Integrated Regulatory Review
Service (IRRS) mission, which will take place in early November this year.

Australia, as a contracting party to the Joint Convention on the Safety of Spent Fuel Management and on the Safety of Radioactive Waste Management, is working hard with other Contracting Parties ahead of the 6th Review Meeting from 21 May to 1 June to review national reports. We are also actively participating in the preparations for the 2018 HEU Minimisation Symposium in June, which will highlight successful reactor conversions, HEU removal activities and production of medical isotopes by non-HEU methods, and provide an opportunity for States to actively consider minimising remaining stocks and use of highly enriched uranium.

Since 2006, Australia has demonstrated that molybdenum-99 production from low enriched uranium targets irradiated in a low enriched uranium-fuelled reactor is a real and practical alternative to highly enriched uranium-based production. Australia has recently constructed the ANSTO Nuclear Medicine Facility, which will have the capacity to supply up to 25 per cent of global needs for this vital diagnostic tool.
In line with the international objective of minimising and eventually eliminating the use of HEU in civil commerce, Australia’s leadership in LEU-produced nuclear medicine demonstrates that this technology is already economically and technically feasible.

Australia is also developing its own waste form technology – Synroc, which will deliver benefits over traditional radioactive waste forms, including in terms of improved volume reduction, durability and flexibility when treating intractable waste streams. Construction of the first industrial-scale facility using this technology will begin soon.

Mr Chairman

The peaceful development, research, production and use of nuclear energy has delivered and is delivering many significant gains to the benefit and advancement of human endeavour and should continue to be advanced and supported in keeping with a strong safety and security culture and based on principles of non-proliferation.

Thank you, Mr Chairman.