Mr Chairman

I have the honour to speak today on behalf of Australia.

Preventing nuclear proliferation is as important today as it was when the NPT was concluded. We must not lose sight of the centrality of this Treaty to upholding global peace and security.

Mr Chairman

Last year we reported that at the 2016 East Asia Summit – the EAS – leaders had adopted a Non-Proliferation Statement addressing the strategic challenge of nuclear non-proliferation. To give effect to that statement, Australia and Thailand co-chaired
a successful EAS Seminar on Non-Proliferation in the Indo-Pacific in Melbourne, Australia, in October 2017.

Mr Chairman

The DPRK’s development of nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles, and its proliferation of sensitive technologies, presents an unacceptable challenge to the nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament framework as established under the NPT and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty.

While we are encouraged by recent reports of a preparedness between the DPRK and the US to talk, and the announced halt in nuclear and ballistic missile tests, this needs to be backed with genuine and verifiable steps toward denuclearisation. Should North Korea finally fulfil this obligation Australia welcomes steps being taken by the international community, including by the IAEA, to prepare for a possible resumption of safeguards.

Australia will keep on working with a range of international partners to ensure the strongest possible response to actions by North Korea that run counter to the NPT and in violation of numerous UNSC resolutions. We call upon those
with influence on the DPRK to exert such influence and intensify efforts to devise solutions.

Mr Chairman

Australia believes it is strongly in the interests the international community and of Iran for the JCPOA to be upheld and fully implemented. It is our view that the JCPOA remains the best available mechanism to assure the international community of Iran’s commitment to conducting an entirely peaceful nuclear program. We welcome the rigour the IAEA applies to verifying Iran’s commitments.

Mr Chairman

In considering ways to strengthen the NPT, we consider it timely to look more closely at the Article X withdrawal provisions of the Treaty with a view to establishing principles to govern the exercise of the right of withdrawal. We commend to you the suggested principles put forward by the Vienna Group of Ten on how the NPT review process could discourage withdrawal from the NPT, thereby strengthening the Treaty.
Mr Chairman

Australia continues to offer its strong support to the critical safeguards work of the IAEA.

Australia encourages all States to work with the IAEA to conclude and implement a Comprehensive Safeguards Agreement and Additional Protocol. Taken together, Australia considers CSA and an AP to constitute the verification standard under the NPT.

We remain concerned about outstanding issues regarding the facilities and activities at the Dair Alzour site in the Syrian Arab Republic. Australia urges Syria to fully cooperate with the IAEA.

On the broader issue of nuclear security, Australia is pleased to join Spain and Canada in a working paper underlining the synergies between the NPT and the need to ensure the higher standards of nuclear security.

Mr Chairman

The Comprehensive Nuclear Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) remains a fundamental element of the non-proliferation architecture and complementary to the objectives of the NPT. Australia is proud to host 21
fully operational International Monitoring System (IMS) stations. We also look forward together with other Friends of the CTBT to co-hosting the 9th Friends of the CTBT Ministerial Meeting in New York in September.

Australia emphasises the importance of ensuring entry into force of the Treaty and urges all States yet to do so to promptly sign and ratify the CTBT, particularly the eight remaining Annex 2 States. To this end, we welcome news of Thailand’s imminent ratification of the Treaty. Pending CTBT entry into force, it is essential that a moratorium on all explosive nuclear testing is maintained.

Mr Chairman

Strict export controls are the bedrock of effective domestic efforts to ensure that legitimate trade, including nuclear material, and equipment and technologies for peaceful purposes does not contribute to the proliferation of nuclear weapons of mass destruction. We take this opportunity to note the admission of India this year to the Wassenaar Group and Australia Group, which represents a significant strengthening of these two groupings.
Mr Chairman

Australia, as you would be aware is a long-standing supporter of Nuclear Weapons Free Zones (NWFZs), which we consider strengthen the non-proliferation and disarmament regime.

Mr Chairman

Central to fostering international confidence and preventing the spread of nuclear weapons, the NPT’s achievements and value is enduring and must not be overlooked or taken for granted. Australia stands ready to work constructively with other States party to ensure the continued strengthening of this key element of the international rules based order.

Thank you, Mr Chairman