Vienna Group of Ten General Debate Statement
[delivered by Australia]

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(Check against delivery)

Chair

I welcome this opportunity to take the floor on behalf of the Vienna Group of Ten - comprising Australia, Austria, Canada, Denmark, Finland, Hungary, Ireland, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway and Sweden.

The Vienna Group of Ten’s purpose at this Preparatory Committee meeting is clear.

Our overarching objective is to ensure – as we have sought to do since our formation in 1980 – that appropriate consideration and weight is given to the
so called “Vienna issues”, spanning pillars two – non proliferation - and three – peaceful uses - of the Treaty.

Indeed, it is our firm and collective view that the NPTs three pillars are of equal importance and mutually reinforcing.

We are also seized by our collective ambition to ensure that the meetings of this Review cycle work to strengthen the NPT as the cornerstone of the non-proliferation and disarmament regime.

In support of these core objectives our Group’s working paper – tabled as working paper five – offers a comprehensive set of finely tuned recommendations on the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, Compliance and verification; export controls; Peaceful Uses of Nuclear energy; nuclear safety and security and on discouraging withdrawal from the NPT.

Chair

The Vienna Group of Ten recognises the centrality of safeguards in maintaining confidence in the peaceful nature of nuclear activities. To this end, we recommend this PrepCom affirm the view that a comprehensive safeguards agreement together with an additional protocol represents the current verification standard. Those States party yet to conclude and bring into force their comprehensive safeguards agreement and an additional protocol are urged to do so as a matter of priority.
We also take this opportunity to register the Group’s commitment to the entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty. We urge all states which have not yet done so to sign and/or ratify the Treaty without delay, particularly remaining Annex 2 States. We also urge States parties at this PrepCom to acknowledge the global de facto norm against nuclear testing underpinned by the CTBT.

The CTBT, together with a complementary Fissile material cut-off treaty are designed to work to strengthen the international nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament regime, underpinned by the NPT. This is also true of the export control regimes including the Zangger Committee and Nuclear Suppliers Group, which help ensure that nuclear-related exports do not directly or indirectly assist in the development of nuclear weapons or explosive devices.

Chair

The Vienna Group of Ten wishes to emphasise the centrality of the NPT in fostering international confidence and cooperation in the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. Peaceful applications of nuclear science and technology are driving enormous gains to the betterment of humanity – across human and animal health, water management, agriculture, food safety and nutrition, energy and environment protection.

We also recognise that the ability to fully harness the benefits of the peaceful uses of nuclear energy, including toward achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, depends on rigorous adherence to the highest levels of nuclear safety and security in addition to the implementation of safeguards.
The Group also emphasises the importance of promoting the equal, full and effective participation of both women and men in nuclear non-proliferation, nuclear disarmament and the peaceful uses of nuclear energy.

Chair

The Vienna Group of Ten is keenly aware of the challenges to the NPT. Limited progress toward implementation of nuclear disarmament, non-compliance challenges and lack of universality are notable.

But the challenges to the Treaty should not overshadow the NPT’s ongoing relevance and importance, nor the gains realised through the indispensable technical work advanced in Vienna-based forums including through the International Atomic Energy Agency.

To this end I commend the Vienna Group of Ten’s working paper on the so-called “Vienna Issues” to all delegates as a tangible contribution by a diverse group of states committed to advancing the universalisation of the NPT, fostering international confidence and cooperation in the peaceful uses of nuclear technology; and strengthening the Treaty’s role in advancing international peace and security.

Thank you Chair.