



AUSTRALIA



AUSTRALIAN MISSION TO THE UNITED NATIONS

E-mail australia@un.int

150 East 42nd Street, New York NY 10017-5612 Ph 212 - 351 6600 Fax 212 - 351 6610 www.AustraliaUN.org

United Nations Disarmament Commission

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**Statement by Ms Vanessa Wood, Director, Nuclear Policy Section,
International Security Division, Australian Department of Foreign Affairs
and Trade**

(Check against delivery)

Mr Chairman

I congratulate Ambassador Tevi from Vanuatu on your election as the Chairman of the 2016 session of the United Nations Disarmament Commission. It is very positive for Australia to see our regional neighbour taking on this important role. It is an honour to be given the opportunity to address this Commission on Australia's behalf.

Mr Chairman

The UNDC's need to perform its core role as a deliberative body and a subsidiary organ of the UN General Assembly is more important now than ever, given the need to develop the debates from last year's NPT Review Conference and First Committee into a positive path-way forward for disarmament. We must also bear in mind the ongoing discussions this year at the Open-Ended Working Group to consider the objectives and agenda for a Fourth Special Session of the General Assembly Devoted to Disarmament in New York, the Open-Ended Working Group on nuclear disarmament in Geneva, and the conclusions from the recent Nuclear Security Summit in Washington.

Mr Chairman

A lot has been said about the 'polarisation' on nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament issues following last year's NPT Review Conference and First Committee. But, we must remember there remains one common objective: the international community shares the overarching goal of a peaceful and secure world free of nuclear weapons.

States may differ on the means and sequencing for achieving that goal but, ultimately, the international community should focus not on differences but on common ground, by identifying concrete and practical 'building blocks' to reach that shared goal.

Mr Chairman

Australia along with 23 countries is pleased to submit a Progressive Approach paper to the UNDC. The paper underlines the reality that there are no 'quick fixes' given that our goal is effective, verifiable and irreversible nuclear disarmament. Only by addressing both the security as well as humanitarian dimensions of nuclear weapons can we take the incremental but necessary steps that will enhance security for all and provide the best chance of ridding the world of nuclear weapons.

Any process that can effectively lead us to a world free of nuclear weapons will by necessity be an inclusive one. Both Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) non-nuclear-weapon States (NNWS) and nuclear-weapon States (NWS) have critical and cooperative roles to play in this regard. Moreover, in order to achieve a world free of nuclear weapons, not only the five nuclear-weapon States under the NPT, but all States that possess nuclear weapons, will need to be involved.

The Progressive Approach paper acknowledges many of the central elements of the draft paper put forward by Kazakhstan as the Chair of Working Group I. These include the critical need to bring into force the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) and to begin negotiations on a Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty (FMCT); encouraging greater transparency from the NWS; reducing the risk of accidental or unauthorised use of nuclear weapons; revitalising the disarmament

machinery including the Conference on Disarmament; strengthening of Nuclear Weapons Free Zones; underlining the necessity of further negotiations between Nuclear Weapon States, whether bilateral, plurilateral or multilateral, to reduce arsenals; and, the important role of disarmament education.

This year marks the 20th anniversary of opening the CTBT for signature. The Treaty has been a very successful instrument of international cooperation, effectively establishing a global norm against testing. However, voluntary moratoria on nuclear test explosions are no substitute for a permanent and legally binding commitment to end nuclear testing and all other nuclear explosions. This can only be achieved by the entry-into-force of the Treaty.

Mr Chairman

On conventional weapons, it is important to recognise key developments including the convening last year of the First Conference of States Parties to the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT). Australia continues to work towards the universalisation of the ATT. We welcome Greece, Lesotho, and Peru as the newest member states. Australia will continue to work closely with states in our own region, the Indo-Pacific, to enable understanding of the ATT and encourage further signatories and ratifications.

The Sixth Biennial Meeting of States on Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) in June will be a useful opportunity for Member States to consider synergies between the States on the Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) Programme of Action and the Arms Trade Treaty. Australia has been a solid supporter of practical measures to regulate trade in conventional weapons, and we will continue to assist states to adhere to and implement well-targeted and workable measures.

We look forward to actively contributing to the discussions ahead.

I thank you, Mr Chairman.