



AUSTRALIAN MISSION TO THE UNITED NATIONS AND THE CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT-mail
UN.Geneva@dfat.gov.au, disarmament.geneva@dfat.gov.au,

Chemin des Fins 2, Petit Saconnex, 1211 Geneva 19 Ph +41 22 799 9100 Fax +41 22 799 9175 www.geneva.mission.gov.au

**Conference on Disarmament
Australian Statement
8 August 2019**

Mr President

Thank you for convening this discussion and thank you to the presenters.

The UN Secretary-General wrote to the President of the Conference on Disarmament in January transmitting the report of the High-level Fissile Material Cut-off treaty (FMCT) expert preparatory group.

We listened to an excellent briefing from the Chair of the Preparatory Group, Ambassador Hulan, in February, but apart from that the CD has not fully examined the report and considered further action as the General Assembly called on us to do in last year's resolution (73/65).

We welcome the opportunity to do so now.

I had the privilege of listening to much of the Preparatory Group's deliberations with our expert. I was struck by the dedication, constructive spirit and level of expertise in the room.

Together with the GGE report, the Preparatory Group produced a truly invaluable 'how to' guide for when we start negotiations.

In addition to setting out various options for treaty elements, without prejudice to national positions, the document provides useful guidance on 'considerations' which provide invaluable context for future negotiations.

The next logical step is for us to start negotiations in the CD using the GGE and the Preparatory Group reports as our tools of trade.

Mr President

I want to draw attention to a couple of elements in the report.

The first goes to the perennial “stocks vs no stocks” issue – which is not a binary issue.

It is worth looking closely at paragraph 16 of the report, which covers possible treaty elements related to functional categories of fissile material

Helpfully it breaks the categories down into “fissile material produced after EiF”, “fissile material produced prior to EiF for civilian and non-proscribed purposes”, “fissile material produced prior to EiF that is designated by the concerned State party as excess to nuclear weapons requirements”, and “fissile material produced for nuclear weapons prior to EiF of the treaty”. Options are listed under each category.

Deepening the conversation on stocks and what we mean by that needs to be part of our conversation.

Mr President

We are all familiar with the arguments that a treaty which includes past stocks would further disarmament and non-proliferation, while one which covers future production would be limited to non-proliferation objectives.

We see the issue in a more linear way. A cut-off treaty focused on future production would have significant positive impact on disarmament through measures such as declarations, transparency and confidence-building measures. These options are covered in the report.

Verified assurance that the quantity of fissile material available for use in nuclear weapons is capped is a powerful contribution to confidence enabling nuclear disarmament.

Indeed, a ban on new production of fissile material for use in weapons is a necessary part of disarmament.

While reducing the size of weapons arsenals is a useful step toward disarmament, the value of such actions is limited if production of fissile material for weapons continues or could be easily resumed.

So how do we get closer to being able to negotiate a treaty on fissile material in the CD?

States can do quite a lot unilaterally and working together in advance of negotiations to build confidence about the management of fissile material. The report suggests the kinds of mandated and voluntary measures that can help build confidence in an FMCT, including in advance of Eif.

We should not wait to advance exploratory work on some of the necessary verification, transparency and confidence-building measures that could feature in and around any future treaty.

We are encouraged by the P5 statement at First Committee last year, and China's statement at the the NPT PrepCom of ongoing P5 work on this issue, and look forward to this bringing results.

Mr President

The increasingly complex and challenging international security climate warrants fresh thinking on measures to address new and extant risks of nuclear weapons use.

Cold War templates for addressing nuclear risk cannot simply be applied to the complexities of today's security climate.

While our ultimate shared goal is disarmament, we also have a shared responsibility to reduce the risk of use of nuclear weapons.

Nuclear possessor states and non-nuclear weapons states need to undertake measures that will promote trust building and confidence.

Reducing nuclear risk builds trust, and can help pave the way for further reductions in future.

There is a raft of work that we need to take forward related to:

- safeguarding procedures and safety;
- clarifying doctrine;
- increasing predictability;
- conflict amelioration; and
- implementing existing non-proliferation and disarmament obligations.

-

We should waste no time or effort in progressing this important area.

That's why we introduced risk reduction as a key theme of the current UN Disarmament Commission's cycle and have supported UNIDIR's work.

The CD had useful initial discussions on risk reduction during subsidiary body discussions last year and can do so again.

We are also participating in the Global Enterprise's Risk Reduction Working Group and look forward to advancing the issue through the CEND initiative.

We would also like to see strong commitments to implementing risk reduction measures agreed at next year's NPT RevCon.

Thank you