



# AUSTRALIA



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## United Nations Disarmament Commission

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### Statement by Darren Hansen, First Secretary, Australian Mission to the United Nations

(Check against delivery)

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Chair

It is a great honour to make this statement in this year in which Australia chairs the Disarmament Commission. The UNDC is a critical element of the disarmament machinery and Australia will do its part to ensure this new three year cycle gets off to a good start.

Chair

At the beginning of this new three year cycle the word “opportunity” immediately comes to mind. This year we have the opportunity to shape the direction that discussions in the UNDC will take for the remainder of its three year cycle.

The “opportunity” we have also applies to the special timing of the UNDC to coincide with the NPT review cycle. It is not often that we can work toward delivering an outcome immediately prior to the NPT Review Conference to be held in 2020. We should also bear in mind that, should an SSOD 4 proceed in 2021 or 2022, then this

UNDC cycle would also be final opportunity to achieve a consensus ahead of that meeting.

Australia's non-proliferation and disarmament priorities remain very much as stated in the 2016 working paper presented by Australia to the UNDC on behalf of 26 countries. These include Comprehensive Nuclear-Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) entry into force, negotiations on a Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty (FMCT), taking forward verification work, encouraging greater transparency, and revitalising the disarmament machinery.

We are pleased that much of this work is moving forward through various dedicated mechanisms demonstrating that the 'Progressive Approach' to which Australia subscribes is indeed progressing.

More recently, the Conference on Disarmament has made some promising advances with the agreement last week to five focused subsidiary bodies and coordinators for these. If we want the disarmament machinery to work the way it was intended, the UNDC too needs to reassess its working methods and objectives.

The UNDC needs to re-train itself to deliberate on focused topics, the outcomes of which can be passed to the CD and other relevant bodies for consideration. If, for example, the outcome of the UNDC's nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament working group had been agreed by consensus last year – we need to ask ourselves what the CD could have done with such a broad document. Probably very little. We actively participated in the working group and appreciate the efforts of those who chaired and participated. But, this new cycle is an opportunity to aim for something fresh, focused and meaningful.

In 1988, the UNDC delivered a consensus outcome on "Principles of Verification". In 1993, an outcome on regional approaches to disarmament and in 1999 an outcome on nuclear weapons-free zones. The common thread in all these UNDC outcomes was that they were focused topics. Sadly, 1999 was the last time the UNDC would deliver a consensus on nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament. Nearly 20 later such focused work has necessarily shifted to other mechanisms given the attempts to cover the entire non-proliferation and disarmament landscape in one UNDC outcome document.

On topics such as outer space where member states are still developing positions and best practices, there is value in a broader discussion – particularly where the venues for such discussions in the UN remain limited. But on non-proliferation and disarmament, where positions have matured and are increasingly fixed, the UNDC needs to do better. Let us use this cycle – as the UNDC has successfully done in the past– to consider a focused discussion, the outcomes of which could be delivered to the 2020 NPT Review Conference, the CD, and SSOD IV.

Working toward an outcome on the topic of nuclear risk reduction, for example, might be an interesting step in the direction of a focused discussion. The theme is broad enough for all to contribute but focused in a particular direction.

Chair

Turning to the second UNDC agenda item this year, Australia was pleased to support the call for a working group on transparency and confidence building measures for outer space activities. As space technology becomes increasingly cost-effective and lower risk, space has never been as contested, congested and competitive as it is today.

The ‘democratisation’ of space, in which access is no longer limited to a handful of state actors presents a series of new challenges. Australia believes that the outer space TCBMs working group presents another “opportunity” for the UNDC. Building trust and establishing international norms and expected behaviour through non-binding TCBMs offers the best and most immediate approach to enhance space security. We encourage all to consider the conference room paper that we have submitted and look forward to participating in the working group deliberations.

I thank you.