Conference on Disarmament
Australian Statement
21 January 2020

Mr President

Australia is delighted to see Algeria assuming the first Presidency of the Conference on Disarmament in 2020 – as part of a cohesive, collaborative Presidential team across 2020.

But before I say a few words about this, I would like to thank colleagues for the heartfelt messages we have received about the bushfires in Australia.

We are very grateful for the outpouring of support for Australia and the Australian people.

Mr President

My delegation welcomes the statement you delivered on behalf of this year’s P6.

It sends a clear signal from our across team about our expectations as facilitators of the work of this important body.

It is clear about how we intend to conduct our work – transparently, inclusive, respectfully.

We intend to do a lot of listening – and we want all CD members to feel comfortable approaching us on any matter. We will try to understand all perspectives.

Mr President

Our priority is to agree a framework for our work as early as possible in the 2020 session. It is clear there is an appetite for the CD to do substantive work this year and we will work creatively to facilitate this.
It will be enormously helpful to us if delegations come to the table with a spirit of possibility. Please have an open mind and look for what you can do, even if this is modest, and resist looking for reasons why not.

Of course we realise there are serious security issues at play. The international security environment is no more favourable than it was in 2019.

But that is why it is all the more important that we use the multilateral tools we have effectively to build trust, to find areas of agreement, to examine critically how we work, and for dialogue on how we can improve the international security environment and use the CD for its intended purpose of multilateral negotiations on disarmament and other relevant international security issues.

Mr President

Australia welcomes the updated gender and disarmament resource pack distributed to delegations last week.

In 2020, we mark 20 years since UN Security Council resolution 1325 on the Women-Peace and Security agenda.

We can do more to integrate gender perspectives in the work of the CD and to foster a more inclusive institutional culture. I encourage delegations to consider some of the ideas in part three of the resource pack.

There is room to improve the evidence base about participation in the CD through the collection of data, on not only the composition of delegations, but also who speaks in the CD.

We can also do more to mentor young colleagues – of all genders – and provide speaking and negotiation opportunities.

We will benefit from fresh perspectives about how we do our work, and they will be energised by the opportunity.

Thank you