



AUSTRALIA



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Australian Statement to the Conference on Disarmament on Agenda Item 2 - FMCT 20 May 2021

Thank you Mr President

Let me begin by thanking you Mr President for convening these discussions on this important topic. I would also like to thank our panellists today for their informative remarks.

Mr President

Australia reiterates its strong belief that a Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty (FMCT) has the potential to deliver substantial security benefits, furthering the twin goals of nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation.

By capping the amount of fissile material available for weapons use, an FMCT would be an essential step towards irreversible nuclear disarmament. It would also further tighten controls on fissile material, reducing the risk of fissile material leaking to proliferators or terrorists.

For more than twenty years, Australia has consistently urged the Conference on Disarmament (CD) to begin negotiations on an FMCT. We continue to be deeply disappointed by the failure of the CD to do so.

We see no substantive reason why negotiations cannot start on this treaty now – with differences fleshed out over the course of discussions. That is the purpose of negotiations.

The CD was purpose built to negotiate disarmament related treaties by consensus ensuring that the national interests of all Member States are taken into account. We do ourselves no favours by further delaying the commencement of negotiations on this important treaty.

As others have noted today, valuable work on this issue was done by the Group of Governmental Experts in 2014-15 and the Expert Preparatory Group in

2017-18. And as Ambassador Gabrielse has outlined today, useful discussions on an FMCT took place in the CD in 2018 in the context of Subsidiary Body 2.

At that time, CD member states underscored the value of further work on this topic. Some delegations suggested work on treaty elements, for example on technical and scientific aspects, scope, definitions, verification, and legal and institutional arrangements or TCBMs.

Australia's view is that we should not wait any longer to advance the exploratory work on some of the elements that could feature in any future treaty.

Further, pending finalisation of an FMCT, we urge states with nuclear weapons yet to do so, to declare and implement a moratorium on fissile material production.

Put simply, negotiating a treaty to end the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons purposes has long been a logical and vital next step in the long road towards ridding the world of nuclear weapons.

We urge all members of this Conference to cooperate in this endeavour.

Thank you Mr President.