**Conference on Disarmament**

**Statement on Ukraine**

**3 March 2022**

**Delivered by Ambassador Amanda Gorely**

Thank you Madam President

As this is the first time I have taken the floor under your presidency allow me to begin by congratulating you and assure you of the full support of my delegation.

I would also like to thank you, Madam President, for your leadership of the Conference at this critical time, and to thank your team for their efforts. It has been greatly appreciated by my delegation, and I am sure by many others.

This is the first time I have addressed the Conference on Disarmament since commencing as Australia’s Ambassador, and I do so in what has been an extraordinary week.

We have witnessed in the Conference this week a resounding condemnation of Russia’s unprovoked and unlawful act of aggression against Ukraine.  Russia’s actions are a flagrant breach of the UN Charter’s prohibition on the use of force and raise issues of the gravest concern to the international community.

Australia is deeply concerned by reports of a rising number of civilian casualties and damage to vital civilian infrastructure in Ukraine. We call on Russia to cease all hostile actions, fully comply with its obligations under international humanitarian law, including in relation to the protection of civilians, and withdraw immediately from Ukraine.

Madam President

Russia’s actions also raise issues of central relevance to the agenda, and the work more broadly, of this body. My delegation has come here today to put our views of these issues on record and to hear the views of others. We are very grateful to you for convening us today and providing this opportunity.

Core agenda items of this body include the prevention of nuclear war and related matters, and arrangements to assure non-nuclear weapons states against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons. Over the course of the last week, we have seen actions by Russia of direct relevance to these matters.

Russia’s decision to put its nuclear deterrent forces on high alert poses a grave risk to the people of Ukraine and the region. This nuclear posturing is unprovoked and unnecessarily escalatory.

It is unacceptable that the use of nuclear weapons is openly threatened by a nuclear weapons state, especially against a non-nuclear weapons state. President Putin’s reckless posturing is a clear demonstration of the dangers these weapons pose to us all.

We are further concerned by developments in Belarus, a country that is complicit in the Russian invasion and now apparently seeks to embroil itself in nuclear threats as well. Russia must immediately take steps to reduce the risk of nuclear miscalculation.

This situation shows there is an urgent need for practical progress on nuclear risk reduction, nuclear arms control, and nuclear disarmament. This body has a central role to play in that. We must not miss the opportunity presented by the establishment of subsidiary bodies this year to make progress on these matters.

Madam President

The resounding condemnation of Russia’s actions that we have witnessed in the Conference this week, has been matched by the incredible show of solidarity we have seen for Ukraine and its people.

We take this opportunity to again reiterate Australia’s full support for Ukraine’s independence and territorial integrity – the bedrock principles of a rules-based order and the essential foundation for peace and security.

Thank you Madam President.