**Australia’s Minister for Foreign Affairs and Minister for Women**

**Senator the Hon Marise Payne – 1 March 2022**

President, Distinguished Ministers, Ambassadors, Excellencies:

 It is my pleasure to address the Conference on Disarmament again.

 Much has changed since I last addressed the Conference in early 2019.

 The pandemic has affected all our lives and had a critical impact on public health, our economies, and the secure fabric of our respective societies.

 But the last two years have not changed the fundamental calculus on disarmament and arms control.

 That calculus is this: the disarmament and arms control regimes that underpin our international rules-based order remain critical to preserving global peace.

 As we have seen over the past few weeks, we cannot take international peace and security for granted, nor can we always rely on nations negotiating in good faith.

 Australia joins the international community in condemning Russia for its unprovoked, unlawful, unwarranted, and unjustified act of aggression against Ukraine.  Russia has chosen war.

 We call on Russia to cease its unlawful and unprovoked actions. Russia must cease its invasion and withdraw its military from Ukraine.

 Russia’s actions are a flagrant breach of the UN Charter’s prohibition on the use of force for territorial gain.

 We reiterate our full support for Ukraine’s independence and territorial integrity – the bedrock principles of a rules-based world order.

 President Putin’s nuclear threats and intimidation are designed to brutally raise the stakes in an already egregious assault on legitimate sovereignty.

 Russia’s nuclear threats are a wilful abuse of provisions of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, and a clear demonstration of the dangers these weapons pose to us all.

 The message we should be sending is certain: there is an urgent need for practical progress on nuclear risk reduction, nuclear arms control, and nuclear disarmament.

 President

 Australia is proud of the role we play in this forum, and in others, to build global stability, confidence in collective security, and mutual trust.

 Australia is fully committed to making sustained, practical contributions in arms control, non-proliferation, and disarmament.

 I have established a new Office for Arms Control and Counter-Proliferation within the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade.

 Led at Ambassador-level, this office will focus our efforts with new momentum.

 Progressing a Treaty to ban the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons remains a top priority for Australia. We can see no good reason not to begin this effort now, in a serious and determined manner.

 In space, threats – or the perception of threats – against space systems contribute to a growing sense of geopolitical instability and insecurity.

 We must seize the opportunity presented by the new Open Ended Working Group on Reducing Space Threats to develop a common understanding of what constitutes responsible behaviours in space – and more importantly – what constitutes irresponsible and unlawful activity.

 In pursuing global security, gender equality is a key value and top foreign policy priority for Australia. We must also add weight to the Women Peace and Security agenda.

 We know the benefits that diverse participation can bring to disarmament, arms control and non-proliferation.

 We hope the Conference will this year progress the proposal initiated by Australia to make the rules of this Conference gender neutral, a small – but meaningful – step towards the equal, full and meaningful participation of women in multilateral disarmament.

 President

 We are encouraged by the talks in Vienna on a return to the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action and Australia calls on all parties to ensure this opportunity for a lasting diplomatic solution is not missed.

 Australia remains deeply concerned about North Korea’s ongoing provocative and unlawful activities, including its wilful disregard for United Nations Security Council Resolutions.

 We strongly condemn the continued development of nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles in North Korea.  We urge North Korea to comply with UN Security Council resolutions, and to return to diplomacy and dialogue without preconditions.

 With the tenth Review Conference of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons again postponed, we must not lose sight of the Treaty’s role as the cornerstone of the global nuclear non-proliferation regime, nor our collective responsibility to preserve and strengthen it.

 Australia welcomed the January statement by P-5 Leaders as a statement of commitment to disarmament and the prevention of nuclear war. Russia must be reminded of its commitment.

 However, it is clear that we cannot rest with words.

 We need tangible action. If not us, then whom?  And if not now, then when?

 Maintaining momentum and working towards the Treaty’s ultimate goal of a world free of nuclear weapons remains the priority. This is what we agreed to when we signed and ratified the Treaty, in good faith and without intentions of evasion.

 Our goal requires us to respect international rules, to build consensus across groupings, and to commitment to a genuine pathway.

President

The Conference on Disarmament has played a vital role in advancing global peace and stability in previous decades. Australia believes this key element of the disarmament architecture can again play such a role, especially in these dark days when the use of nuclear weapons is openly threatened by a Nuclear Weapons State against a non-nuclear weapons state.

To this end Australia stands ready to think and act creatively, and constructively.  We urge others to join this noble endeavour. Thank you.

**ENDS**