2023 NPT Preparatory Committee
General Debate

Statement by Australia on behalf of the Vienna Group of 10

Australia, Austria, Canada, Denmark, Finland, Hungary, Ireland, the Kingdom of the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway and Sweden

Chair

I welcome this opportunity to take the floor on behalf of the Vienna Group of Ten, comprising Australia, Austria, Canada, Denmark, Finland, Hungary, Ireland, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway and Sweden.

The 2023 NPT Preparatory Committee presents the opportunity for States party to reinforce their commitment to strengthening the Treaty across its three pillars – pillars which are equally important and mutually reinforcing.

We welcome your commitment as Chair to ensuring due and balanced consideration is paid to all three pillars at this PrepCom. We would like also to highlight the work of the International Atomic Energy Agency that contributes to the implementation of the NPT.

Chair

The Vienna Group of Ten, has met in advance of this NPT PrepCom, as it has since 1980 to consider ways to ensure appropriate consideration and weight is given to the so called ‘Vienna issues’ which span pillars two and three.

Our work has culminated in a working paper, tabled as Working Paper 17, which provides a comprehensive and carefully negotiated set of recommendations and supporting background on compliance and verification; nuclear safety, nuclear security, the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, peaceful uses of nuclear technology, export controls and discouraging withdrawal from the NPT.

All recommendations have as their overriding objective the strengthening of the NPT.

Chair

As we meet here, the safe, secure and safeguarded peaceful use of nuclear energy and technology is under threat as a result of the Russian Federation’s aggression against Ukraine.

The threat or use of force against nuclear facilities devoted to peaceful purposes in Ukraine constitute violations of international law, including the principles of the United Nations Charter, International Humanitarian Law, in particular Additional Protocol I to the Geneva Conventions and the objectives of the IAEA Statute. We condemn the illegal actions of the Russian Federation and call upon it to cease immediately all actions against and at Ukraine’s nuclear facilities, notably the Zaporishzhia Nuclear Power Plant, and to implement the Ukraine-related resolutions adopted by the IAEA Board of Governors. We underline our collective solidarity with Ukraine.
Chair
The Vienna Group of Ten takes pride in the fact that our paper has been repeatedly drawn on by States party and successive NPT PrepCom and RevCon Chairs as a useful point of reference.

Its usefulness derives from the fact that our recommendations represent a carefully negotiated consensus among a diverse membership representing a range of experiences and perspectives on nuclear-related issues. In spite of our diversity, however, we are likeminded in many ways.

The Vienna Group of Ten considers the NPT to be the cornerstone of the international nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation regime. We share the view that the strength of the Treaty comes from its near universality, and we are committed to protecting and further advancing its universal application.

We recognise the critical role that safeguards play in maintaining confidence in the peaceful nature of nuclear activities and recommend that the PrepCom affirm that a Comprehensive Safeguards Agreement, together with an Additional Protocol constitutes the current verification standard. We encourage those States party that have not yet done so to conclude and bring into force an Additional Protocol and remaining States with a Small Quantity Protocol (SQP) based on the original standard text to amend or rescind such SQP.

Chair
The Vienna Group of Ten considers the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty to be vital to the international nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament regime, underpinned by the NPT, through which the nuclear test moratorium has become a de facto international norm. The Vienna Group of Ten is committed to achieving the CTBT’s entry into force. We urge all States that have not yet done so to sign and/or ratify the Treaty without delay, in particular those remaining Annex 2 States.

The Vienna Group of Ten recognises the central role of the NPT in fostering international confidence and cooperation in the peaceful uses of nuclear energy.

We recommend that the PrepCom underscore that peaceful applications of nuclear technology are realising enormous gains to the betterment of humanity across human health, water management, agriculture, food safety and nutrition and environmental protection and can contribute in significant and broad-ranging ways to the realisation of the Sustainable Development Goals.

Our ability to harness fully the benefits of the peaceful uses of nuclear energy, however, depend on ensuring that such use and application continue to be accompanied by commitments to ongoing implementation of safeguards obligations, and the rigorous adherence to the highest standards of nuclear safety and security.

Moreover, effective national export controls are central to enabling cooperation in the peaceful uses of nuclear energy, thereby contributing to international peace and security. We underline the role of nuclear-related export controls in ensuring that such exports do not contribute to the proliferations of nuclear weapons or other nuclear devices, and their means of delivery. The Nuclear Suppliers Group and the Zangger Committee serve to facilitate the trade of nuclear items for peaceful purposes for the benefit of all.
The group also emphasises the importance of promoting the equal, full and effective participation of both women and men in nuclear non-proliferation, nuclear disarmament and the peaceful use of nuclear energy.

Chair

The Vienna Group of Ten is clear eyed about the challenges facing the NPT. This includes limited progress towards nuclear disarmament and actions contrary to implementation of nuclear disarmament commitments, non-compliance challenges and the lack of universality of the Treaty. Despite these challenges, we note initiatives to strengthen the NPT which are important and showcase the continued strong support for the Treaty and the achievement of its goals.

As we progress through the 11th Review Cycle, the Vienna Group of Ten calls on all States party to redouble their efforts to realise the fundamental goals of the Treaty and engage in a spirit of constructive cooperation.

We as a Group stand ready to do so including by discussing our paper and the ideas contained within.

Thank you