



AUSTRALIA



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International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons

**Statement by Nicholas Purtell
Director for United Nations Political and Commonwealth**

Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates, ladies and gentlemen

On behalf of the Australian Government, I welcome the commemoration of the International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons.

All of us here understand that the consequences of any use of nuclear weapons in conflict would be catastrophic. The impact of a nuclear conflict would include long-term indirect effects on human health, the environment, climate and the global economy. This concern underpins all our efforts to promote effective and practical nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation.

Nuclear disarmament is, however, a fundamentally collective endeavour in which the nuclear armed states must be engaged. It is only through taking practical, realistic measures to enable states to

disarm that effective progress in eliminating nuclear weapons is possible.

These measures include: increased transparency among nuclear-armed states to build confidence and support further disarmament; entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT); starting negotiations on, and concluding as soon as possible a Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty; reducing the operational status of nuclear weapons systems; diminishing the role of nuclear weapons in security policies; and reducing the number of non-strategic nuclear weapons. Developing robust, widely accepted nuclear disarmament verification measures will also be an essential part of the process.

All of these will ultimately help create an environment where countries, including the Nuclear Weapon States and those who rely on their nuclear umbrella, will see themselves being more secure without nuclear weapons than with them.

Australia is especially focused on promoting entry into force of the CTBT. Yesterday, Foreign Minister Bishop, at the CTBT Article XIV Conference, renewed our call upon all remaining Annex II States to ratify the CTBT without delay so that the treaty can finally enter into force. It is disappointing we still find ourselves some distance from achieving this goal, almost two decades after the treaty opened for signature. We also call upon states to maintain support for the completion and full testing of the verification regime for the CTBT.

North Korea remains the only state to have tested a nuclear weapon in the 21st Century. Its ongoing provocative actions demonstrate the urgency of bringing the CTBT into force.

Some states, frustrated by what they see as the slow pace of nuclear disarmament, have argued that the only moral response to nuclear weapons is to seek a separate treaty banning nuclear weapons.

We understand and appreciate this moral approach, but Australian diplomacy is pragmatic and our approach is to focus on what is realistic and achieves results.

Pursuing a separate treaty to ban nuclear weapons would risk undermining the security afforded by the NPT. It would also ignore current global security realities. A ban would neither convince a state like North Korea to give up its nuclear weapons program, nor help prevent nuclear materials falling into the hands of terrorists.

Clearly there is still much to do to achieve the total elimination of nuclear weapons.

We are focused on practical and realistic actions which will make a real difference in leading us towards a world without nuclear weapons, where nuclear technology is used only for peaceful purposes. Bringing the CTBT into force is one of those key steps.

Thank you.