

ADDITIONAL STATEMENT FROM SENATOR MARGETTS

The report rightly points out that India sees China via Pakistan as its major security threat. From China's point of view, India is just one of their security concerns. Others include the former Soviet Union, Japan and South Korea, each of which poses an actual or potential nuclear threat.

What is missing from the report is the positive initiatives Australia can take in reducing regional tensions.

Statements about what Australia can do in the context of the interconnected threats in the region, must take account of Australia's role in providing nuclear raw materials to Japan and South Korea. The build up of plutonium in Japan in particular contributes to China's insecurity which in turn leads them to build up their nuclear weapon arsenal. This is then perceived by India as threat to its security and is a significant factor in India's decision to demonstrate its nuclear weapon capability.

Australia withdrawing from supply of uranium would not in itself diffuse these tensions but it would send a signal that we understand the fears of the region and are not willing to be part of the build up of nuclear threat.

The section of the report dealing with the New Agenda Coalition (8.108-8.112) gives a good explanation of the case for the initiative. The proposal in 8.112 that Australia could play an innovative brokering role between the nuclear weapons states and the New Agenda Coalition has some merit. However, signing on to the initiative at the United Nations would be a stronger indication of Australia's commitment to nuclear disarmament and would be a position of greater integrity.

Recommendation: That Australia sign on to the initiative of the New Agenda Coalition at the United Nations.

There is little doubt that the NPT negotiations are reaching one of the most critical points in their history. It is up to Australia to decide whether to continue following the line of the nuclear states or to try to pull together a wider consensus.

It is feared that unless something is done to bring a real timetable for disarmament into the negotiations, the NPT may cease to exist.

Recommendation: That Australia supports moves for an enforceable timetable for nuclear disarmament within the terms of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty.

Final comment: While the Committee noted the need for there to be greater expertise available in Australia in relation to South Asia, it stopped short of drawing attention to the obvious inadequacy of advice from our own Department of Foreign Affairs.