



29 June 2017



Dear Mr [REDACTED]

Thank you for your correspondence of 13 June 2017 regarding nuclear weapons ban treaty negotiations. I am replying on behalf of the Prime Minister.

Australia is committed to the goal of a world free of nuclear weapons. We believe this goal must be pursued in an effective, determined and pragmatic way. Eliminating nuclear weapons is not a quick or an easy task. It will take sustained, practical and incremental steps.

The Australian Government has a consistent, considered position on a nuclear weapons 'ban treaty'. A ban treaty would be ineffective in eliminating nuclear weapons. Proceeding with ban treaty negotiations without the participation of states possessing nuclear weapons, or without due regard for the international security environment, will not help to create the conditions for further major reductions in nuclear arsenals. Such a treaty risks undermining the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and other treaties by creating ambiguity and confusion through parallel obligations, and by deepening divisions between nuclear and non-nuclear weapon states. The Government's assessment is that the ban treaty negotiations are not an effective measure with which to achieve nuclear disarmament.

The NPT is one of the world's most universal treaties. It is the cornerstone of global nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament, and of global peace and security. The NPT already has a consensus-based roadmap for the elimination of nuclear weapons, as expressed in the 2010 NPT Action Plan. Australia's priority is to strengthen the NPT and to implement the Action Plan, as the agreed and most realistic means of achieving progress on nuclear disarmament.

Australia and Japan co-founded in 2010 the Non Proliferation and Disarmament Initiative, a cross-regional group of 12 countries: Australia, Canada, Chile, Germany, Japan, Mexico, the Netherlands, Nigeria, the Philippines, Poland, Turkey and the United Arab Emirates. Through this group and other dedicated efforts, Australia continues to take forward the NPT Action Plan.

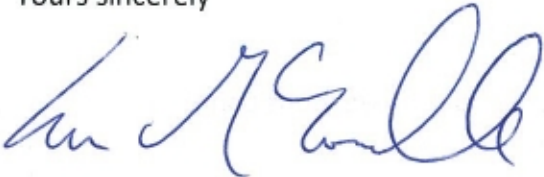
Consistent with the NPT Action Plan, the Australian Government promotes and is active in other initiatives to advance nuclear disarmament. For example, we have long promoted the global norm against nuclear testing established under the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). To advocate universalisation and entry-into-force of the CTBT, Ms Bishop co-chaired a 'Friends of the CTBT' event involving the UN Secretary-General and some 80 countries, with 40 represented at Ministerial level, in New York in September 2016. A second example is our policy and technical work on a future Fissile Material Cut-Off Treaty (FMCT). Another example is our working together with nuclear weapon states and non-nuclear weapon states to develop technical tools capable of verifying nuclear disarmament (for instance, in 2016 we co-sponsored a UN General Assembly

resolution which established a Group of Government Experts to progress work on disarmament verification).

Australia will continue to push hard for the practical steps and the political will needed to bring about a world without nuclear weapons.

I trust this information is of assistance.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Ian McConville', written in a cursive style.

Ian McConville  
Acting Assistant Secretary  
Arms Control and Counter-Proliferation Branch