Open-ended Working Group on the Fourth Special Session of the General Assembly Devoted to Disarmament

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Statement by Mr Darren Hansen, First Secretary, Australian Mission to the United Nations

(Check against delivery)

Mr Chair

From the outset, Australia would like to congratulate you on the manner in which you chaired the March session of this OEWG and we were also pleased by the constructive engagement of delegations.

Australia supported the UNGA resolution which established this open-ended working group and so we will continue to do our utmost in the remaining sessions to achieve a positive outcome.

We would like to thank the chair for your synthesis working paper which seeks to draw from the papers submitted by Non-Aligned Movement, the United States and Australia.

As we mentioned in our statement to the first substantive session in March, a core element of our discussions at this open ended working group will be to determine whether the convening of a fourth special session could add value to the work already underway in the existing disarmament machinery.
Any future SSOD would need to avoid wholesale duplication of efforts in these disarmament fora. We also need to reflect on the factors that led to past SSOD and OEWG failures and learn from these as we consider the path ahead.

On this basis, Australia proposed a pragmatic niche model approach whereby all Member States would have the opportunity to consider and make progress on a select number of priority areas on the disarmament and international security agenda. More recently, in-depth discussions of this kind have largely been reserved for a small group of states through structures such a Group of Government Experts. These groups are extremely useful and Australia fully supports them. At the same time, we believe that it could be equally useful to have a format whereby all member states can come together for focused discussions. The SSOD could assume this role and set itself aside from other regularised disarmament fora, giving it a unique standing and meaning.

Importantly, this could offer the SSOD an opportunity to break away from comprehensive approaches which have played their part in the unfortunate results flowing from SSOD 2, SSOD 3 and the more recent Open-ended working groups thereafter.

The SSOD 1 outcome document makes no stipulation that, in taking forward its Programme of Action, a comprehensive agenda is required on each occasion the SSOD is convened. Rather, if progress could be best be made through incremental efforts to address specific areas of the Programme of Action, I imagine the authors of the document, our predecessors, would be highly supportive.

We appreciate that there are a range of views in the room and so look forward to discussions at this session on the best means to advance the objectives of the SSOD.

I thank you.