

CONTROLLING MISSILE PROLIFERATION

Address by Senator Gareth Evans, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade to open the Canberra Plenary Session of the Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR) Partners, Canberra, 9 March 1993

Let me begin by welcoming you all very warmly to Australia for this the 7th Plenary of the MTCR - the first, I note, to be held in the Southern Hemisphere. I hope you will have a productive and enjoyable visit both to Canberra and to whatever other parts of Australia that you are able to visit. Australians will remind you, particularly at election time, that Canberra is not representative of Australia!

We are happy to be the host of the MTCR Plenary, not only because of our commitment to the principles which this particular regime embodies but also because of our more general commitment to strong engagement with you in the battle against the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. That battle is part of an increasingly common approach amongst like minded nations - particularly those represented here today - to protect their security by cooperative measures such as those we have entered into together in the various non-proliferation regimes.

I was very gratified to hear, at the signing ceremony for the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) in Paris in January, the generous recognition of Australia's contribution to the achievement of that particular global arrangement. I have also been determined that Australia should play an active and imaginative role in the various export control regimes which seek to impede weapons proliferation, and have been happy to accept the substantial resource burden which our chairmanship of the Australia Group has involved in this respect.

I do not need to tell this group in particular that non-proliferation is one of the most crucial - arguably the most crucial - cutting edge issues in international and regional security in the nineties. That, I am sure, is policy advice which you are also offering your own governments. Innovative, as well as unflagging, efforts are required if we are not to end up looking back on this era as one of lost opportunities, despite the concrete advances that have been made.

The end of the Cold War, while it may not have delivered quite the kind of New World Order we might have hoped for, did certainly present us with tremendous opportunities. The sterile ideologies of the past no longer constitute stumbling blocks to the promotion of our common security, including through disarmament and arms control arrangements. On the other hand, the newly complex world in which we live presents us with a daunting, and it would seem sometimes growing, array of different sorts of challenges. Nationalism and ethnic identification have resulted in the break-up of nation states and regional conflict in a number of areas has grown more likely rather than less. And intertwined as a constant thread in all of these new challenges is the daily risk of weapons proliferation.

I have already referred to the Chemical Weapons Convention as a recently achieved benchmark in our efforts to establish global norms in the battle against Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) proliferation. We believe that such global norms and structures are centrally important.

With the CWC now in place, we have another important element in global arrangements in place, although it will need further work and commitment to be made fully effective. It is also the case that the norm-setting impact of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) in the last twenty years has been of fundamental benefit to the global community, although more work will be needed both to achieve even wider adherence and also the Treaty's indefinite extension after 1995. The Biological Weapons Convention has also been a useful, if essentially declaratory, commitment - and it can be made more useful with some imaginative work on verification procedures.

It is clear, however, that effective export control regimes - like the MTCR, the Australia Group and the Nuclear Suppliers Group - continue to be of vital significance in underpinning global treaties. The argument about the relative effectiveness of global norms and export regimes in containing the risk of proliferation, is, I believe, essentially an academic and sterile exchange the most which does no great credit to the protagonists of either viewpoint. It has all the flavour of fiddling while Rome burns. The plain, inescapable reality is that treaties and supplier group regimes must be complementary, and must both be effective if proliferation is to be stemmed.

It may be that we will find ourselves, much further down the track, in a world

where the global norms exert such discipline that there is no continuing requirement for supplier group arrangements. But we in Australia believe that to be a still distant goal. Equally, if we put all of our reliance on supply side constraints as a way of fencing in the proliferators, a cursory glance at recent history will show us how unlikely we are to be successful. Let us, above all, not allow bickering amongst us on what can perhaps be described, with respect, as theological issues to obscure our common purpose. That common purpose must lie both in the global norms we have achieved - and need still to improve - and in the export control regimes which we must seek to make as effective and non-porous as possible.

As you know, there is as yet no global norm to back the vital task of the Missile Technology Control Regime. Australia would prefer that such a treaty existed, but we are acutely aware of the complexities in negotiating such a global arrangement. Thus the MTCR is not only the front line in constraining the proliferation of destabilising missile systems; it is the only line.

The anomaly of having no supporting global mechanism makes it even more important that the MTCR function effectively, not just as an export control regime but as an example - and perhaps even an inspiration - for the global non-proliferation objectives in this field. This will put demands on the regime in terms of making its practices transparent and sensitive to the proper national interests of all countries. At the same time the regime, rightly, must have paramount in it its provisions the need to prevent the proliferation of destabilising missile delivery systems and technologies.

The spread of longer range missiles, or the capability of producing them, is of obvious and immediate concern. The use of such missiles, particularly in regional conflicts, has proved through its indiscriminate impact on population centres and targets, to be a highly intimidatory weapon in itself: witness the use of Scuds by Iraq. But more often than not missiles are also sought for the potential delivery of weapons of mass destruction. The spread of any WMD capability is a major threat to global and regional security, but the combination of such capability with a missile delivery vehicle is even more alarming and destabilising.

Since its inception in 1987, the MTCR, as you will know, has had some success in inhibiting the proliferation of missiles within its scope, through its application of export controls and through its consultative mechanisms. An important forward step was the expansion of the scope of the regime. Australia was

particularly pleased that at the last plenary meeting in Oslo, partners in the regime ensured that its coverage went beyond missiles of a range and payload relevant primarily to the delivery of nuclear weapons to cover potential chemical or biological warheads. I note also the increase in the regime's membership and the success - albeit mixed in some respects - in persuading a number of key states still outside the regime to indicate that they abide by the MTCR guidelines. Indeed, of the missile exporting states with advanced production capability only one, the DPRK, makes no pretence at abiding by the MTCR guidelines.

So we come as a like minded community to this meeting in Canberra having already made some contribution to stemming the proliferation of destabilising missile delivery systems. Significant challenges however, lie ahead. Aided by past transfers and continued leakage, more states are developing the relevant technological capabilities, and no formal global expectation of constraint yet exists to dampen the demand side of the problem.

Australia has no long range missile program and we are particularly keen to see that our immediate region remains free of threats from all forms of exotic and destabilising weaponry. As with each of the non-proliferation regimes, we look to the MTCR to provide both a material and principled contribution to this aspect of our national security.

As I said earlier, there is no other arrangement addressing the problem of missile proliferation. Thus Australia both supports the regime and expects it to give a lead in inhibiting and deterring missile proliferation both globally and in our region.

Our region does not yet have highly developed common security structures. But the countries of East Asia have been devoting increasing effort and creativity to developing means of expressing a shared determination to avoid threats to our common regional security. In building more intense patterns of regional security cooperation, Australia is convinced that it is important to factor in the contributions which global cooperation strategies can make. Our specific security concerns, like those of most countries of the world, are in the first instance regional in orientation; but a post Cold War world will rely for regional security much more than ever before on the contribution which global arrangements can make.

If we have learned one thing in the post Cold War world it is that our security

interests must increasingly be approached on a basis of common interests if they are to deliver us from the threat which the uncontrolled spread and use of weapons of massive destruction and technologically advanced weaponry poses. So our broader interest - like that of all of us here today - is in security arrangements which contain such a threat. Global norms and arrangements like the MTCR have a vital part to play in meeting such a common objective.

And so the strengthening of the missile technology regime and the broadening of its reach will be fundamental to the achievement of our vital and shared security objectives. In their broadly based like-mindedness, the countries participating in this effort have a key advantage which they would do well to exploit to the full. I look to you, the delegates, to translate this political will, cooperatively, into productive lines of action.

I wish you every success in your endeavours to this end over the next two days of this plenary meeting.