Executive Summary

Australia shares the view that verification is a key element of arms limitation and disarmament agreements. Australia has a strong interest in participating in the Group of Governmental Experts to be established pursuant to UNGA Resolution 71/67. Australia believes that identifying and developing workable and effective verification and monitoring measures will foster enhanced confidence, underpin future disarmament efforts and contribute to achievement and maintenance of a world free of nuclear weapons. Australia looks forward to working with Norway and the broader global community to advance this initiative in 2018 and 2019.

End

Australia welcomes and strongly supports the UNGA71 resolution establishing a Group of Governmental Experts (GGE) on the role of verification in advancing nuclear disarmament. Australia was actively involved in the drafting of the resolution and co-sponsored it. We have a strong interest in participating in the verification GGE and look forward to working with Norway and the broader global community to advance this initiative in 2018 and 2019.

Verification is an essential element in the process of achieving arms limitation and disarmament agreements, as underlined in the UNDC 1988 Principles of Verification. Since then, there has been some excellent collaborations that have progressed the verification agenda in concrete, practical ways, such as the initiative between Norway and the UK, commencing in 2007, where for the first time a Nuclear Weapon State and a Non-Nuclear-Weapon State had worked together to explore the challenges of nuclear weapon arms control and disarmament verification. The United States and the UK have continued to pursue cooperation on technical aspects of nuclear disarmament verification over a number of years.

At the 2010 NPT Review Conference, in addition to committing to the principles of verifiability, transparency and irreversibility, all states agreed on “the importance of supporting (international) cooperation aimed at increasing confidence, improving transparency and developing efficient verification capabilities related to nuclear disarmament (Action 19).

Australia shares the view that there is no viable alternative to practical and verifiable steps as a path to nuclear disarmament. Australia believes that identifying and developing workable and effective verification and monitoring measures will foster enhanced confidence, underpin disarmament efforts and contribute to achievement and maintenance of a world free of nuclear weapons. The GGE on Verification offers a major opportunity to make tangible progress in advancing verifiable nuclear disarmament.

In April 2016, Australia submitted a working paper to the Open-ended Working Group on a Fourth Special Session on Disarmament (SSOD IV) which included the topic of verification and compliance as one of three agenda items in a Niche Model approach. We consider this
an important area that Member States could advance in the current international climate. Our working paper will be considered at the final OEWG in June 2017 and, if agreed, the outcomes of the GGE could feed into a future SSOD.

Australia welcomes the valuable contribution of the International Partnership for Nuclear Disarmament Verification (IPNDV). To be adequate and effective, verification must cover all relevant weapons, facilities, locations, installations and activities. Initiatives such as IPNDV provide a forum for studying the many practical issues surrounding future verification mechanisms, and make a positive contribution to advancing nuclear disarmament, including by:

. developing technical solutions to address monitoring and verification challenges;
. building verification knowledge and capacity in non-nuclear weapon states as well as nuclear weapon states; and
. injecting the concrete experiences of multiple states into discussions over global zero by highlighting the technical work needed to facilitate verified disarmament.

Australia is proud to be an active participant in the IPNDV and with Poland, co-chairs Working Group Two (On-site Inspections). Australia and Japan have led consideration of transparency in Working Group One (Monitoring and Verification Objectives) and Australia provides expertise to Working Group Three (Technical Challenges and Solutions). We would like to broaden the discussion so that more states have an opportunity to engage on this issue. Australia stands ready to contribute to the GGE on Verification, if invited, drawing on its experience in the IPNDV as well as its long standing engagement on the peaceful uses of nuclear energy, including its extensive outreach program within our Indo-Pacific region.