

PRESIDING OFFICERS RESPONSE TO

Joint Standing Committee on Treaties Report 106, Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament

Recommendation 18

The Committee recommends that the Presiding Officers agree to all outgoing official parliamentary delegations being briefed on nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation issues, with a mandate to raise these issues during discussions with other parliamentarians as appropriate.

For each outgoing delegation visit, oral and written briefings are requested from the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. Generally those briefings relate to the specific issues that the delegation will be focusing on during its visit and, for bilateral visits, on the relationship Australia has with the country to be visited.

Should individual delegations wish for briefings on nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation to be provided for all outgoing delegations, then such briefings will be requested from the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade.

Recommendation 19

The Committee recommends that the Presiding Officers agree to the Parliament's outgoing delegation program for 2010 being arranged so that the regular bilateral visit to the United States coincides with the 2010 NPT Review Conference, thus allowing parliamentarians an opportunity to participate in this Conference.

In general the regular bilateral visit to the United States is conducted on a biennial basis, except in circumstances where the proposed year of a visit is not optimal (eg during a Presidential election year).

The most recent bilateral visit to the United States took place from 26 September to 11 October 2009, so the next visit would not be due until 2011.

The 2010 outgoing delegations program was developed over several months from June to September 2009, and included consultation with the Presiding Officers, the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, and Australian embassies and high commissions. The Presiding Officers wrote to the Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs seeking approval for the 2010 program on 16 September 2009, a day prior to the tabling of the Treaties Committee report. The 2010 program proposed by the Presiding Officers did not include a bilateral visit to the United States as one was taking place in 2009 and the next was not due until 2011.

Recommendation 20

The Committee recommends that the delegation to the 121st Inter-Parliamentary Union Conference in October 2009 takes this report to that conference to promote further discussion of nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament issues.

As the 121st IPU Assembly was in October 2009, this recommendation relates to a past event. The Treaties Committee report was tabled on 17 September 2009 and Australia's IPU

delegation departed for the assembly on 6 October 2009. It is not known whether the Treaties Committee report was drawn to the attention of the delegation prior to its departure.

Nevertheless it should be noted that a special session on nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation is scheduled to take place at the 122nd IPU Assembly to be held in Bangkok in March 2010. Australia is expected to have a leading role in presentations at that session, as a result of Australia playing a lead role in having a resolution on nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation adopted at the 120th IPU Assembly in Addis Ababa in April 2009.

Recommendation 21

The Committee recommends that the Parliament adopt a resolution on the Parliament's commitment to the abolition of nuclear weapons.

This is a matter for the Parliament as a whole rather than the Presiding Officers and would require a resolution to be prepared and then put to the Parliament by a parliamentarian or group of parliamentarians.

Recommendation 22

The Committee calls on parliaments around the world to support similar actions to those contained in recommendations 18, 19, 20 and 21.

This is a matter for parliaments around the world to consider individually.

The special session on nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation scheduled to take place at the 122nd IPU Assembly to be held in Bangkok in March 2010 will bring the issue of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation to the attention of parliaments from around the world.

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