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TO THE UNITED NATIONS

**Tenth Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-  
Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT); General Debate  
Statement by Austria**

**delivered by**

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***Check against delivery***



Mr President,

at the outset let me congratulate you and assure you of Austria's full support.

Austria considers the NPT as crucial. We need to see this treaty strengthened, respected and fully implemented in letter and spirit and across all three pillars. We see international cooperation and the principle of multilateralism as central to address and solve the many challenges and dangers that nuclear weapons pose for the international community.

Austria aligns herself with the statement of the European Union.

Mr President,

We are meeting at a very precarious moment. Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine and Russia's nuclear threats have shaken the entire nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation regime, and the NPT in particular. Austria joins the many voices that we have heard in categorically rejecting and condemning Russia's clear violation of international law.

We are deeply worried about the consequences for the nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation regime and the NPT. Some states are responding with a re-emphasis on nuclear weapons and on nuclear deterrence. In our view, this is a grave mistake, since the last few months have only further demonstrated the precariousness, the fallacy and the many uncertainties and risks on which the belief of nuclear deterrence is based. We are at a threshold moment: We are on track towards a nuclear arms race dynamic and much increased proliferation pressures, with dramatic negative effects for international security. So it is up to us to turn the ship around, return to nuclear disarmament and a genuine move away from the belief in a nuclear weapons-based security approach.



Regrettably, implementation has been uneven and lacking when it comes to nuclear disarmament. Worse: Over the past years, we see extremely worrying developments in some or all nuclear weapons states going directly counter to their NPT obligations and commitments, such as modernization, arsenal increases, improving capabilities, reducing transparency and adding nuclear use cases.

Portraying nuclear weapons as essential for national security is a dangerous proliferation driver.

Just as disconcerting are the increasingly strident nuclear rhetoric, reckless talk about the "usability" of nuclear weapons and nuclear threats that have been made.

Together with many states, Austria categorically rejects and condemns any and all nuclear threats, whether they be explicit or implicit and irrespective of the circumstances. We see any use or threat of use of nuclear weapons as a violation of international law, including the Charter of the United Nations.

As stated before, we unequivocally condemn Russia's irresponsible and unacceptable nuclear threats. But we have to be clear-eyed that nuclear deterrence doctrines are necessarily based and rely on the threat of the actual use of nuclear weapons. They are therefore based on credible and concrete planning and intentions to inflict global catastrophic consequences. Not to mention the constant risks this practice carries. Any attempt to distinguish between "irresponsible" and "responsible" nuclear threats is highly questionable and logically inconsistent from our point of view.

It is, thus, hard to say that Art. VI of the NPT is implemented, certainly not in spirit. 13000 weapons remain in the possession of nine possessor states that all have security doctrines setting out use or threat of use cases. These doctrines pose serious risks to all humanity and, hence, diminish the common security of all.



Mr. President,

No matter how difficult the context, we need to use this conference to push ahead implementation of the NPT to achieve significant and credible progress on nuclear disarmament and strengthen non-proliferation alike.

And the majority of states have been doing just that: Shifting the focus from argued nuclear weapons-based security needs and approaches towards the increasing and powerful evidence about the catastrophic, transboundary and potentially global humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons, their inherent risks and the dangers of nuclear deterrence for all of humanity. We are convinced that these arguments and this conversation – at state and societal levels - offers the best possibility to move away from the precarious notion of international security that is based on threatening mass killing and destruction.

This crucial evidence also underpins our strong commitment to the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW). The TPNW is not only fully complementary with the NPT but brings a crucial and urgently needed re-enforcement of the norms for nuclear disarmament and against the proliferation of nuclear weapons. Austria calls on all states to join the TPNW and to engage actively and constructively with the profound arguments on which it is based.

Until all states are ready to implement their Article VI obligations, one key area of work will be to reduce the nuclear risks imposed on all humanity. The discussion around this key obligation for possessors must be broad, inclusive, go beyond strategic considerations, and encompassing all relevant measures to minimize use and accident potentials as far as possible. We also need urgent progress on the CTBT, especially by Annex-II states.



In the interest of time, I will expand on our positions on non-proliferation, including Iran, JCPOA and DPRK in Main Committee II. On peaceful uses, while supporting many important applications when applying the highest standards of nuclear safety and security, I wish to underline our clear position against nuclear power generation, be it for SDG implementation or to combat climate change. It is neither viable nor cost efficient and the disposal of waste and spent fuel remains unresolved. We will expand in more detail on these concerns in Main Committee III.

I wish to underline our support for peaceful uses pillar of the NPT. However, we do not consider nuclear energy production to be compatible with the concept of sustainable development nor a viable nor a cost-efficient option to combat climate change. The safe and permanent disposal of high-level radioactive waste and spent nuclear fuel is still unresolved. We will expand in more detail on these concerns in Main Committee III.

Mr President,

We also need to chart a clear path forward and enable equal, full and effective participation by all genders and of civil society and include affected communities as well as young people.

To conclude: Humanity is facing three existential risks at the same time: catastrophic climate change, a worldwide pandemic and risks of nuclear war. Experts have warned about all three for decades. With the Amazon burning and sea levels rising, finally the world is realising that we cannot ignore climate change and pandemics anymore. The difference between these two and nuclear weapons is that we cannot wait until we see the consequences and we cannot prepare. We only have the chance to act preemptively by removing this existential threat all together. And, as is the case with all these crucial issues, we can only find solutions by acting together and in the interest of humanity and of our common security. We owe it to the survivors of nuclear use and testing and to future generations that we use this conference to make real progress.