First Committee

“Disarmament Machinery”

Statement by Austria

delivered by

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Chairperson,

Austria fully aligns itself with the Statement delivered/to be delivered by the European Union. In our national capacity we wish to add some remarks of particular importance to my country.

Security and disarmament are intrinsically interlinked. Quantitative and qualitative improvements in armament increase the risks and challenges to global security. It is precisely because of the current challenging security environment, that disarmament needs urgent attention and a functioning and above all an operational disarmament machinery - a machinery fit for purpose. A machinery that is effective and efficient. In 1978 the international community agreed how to structure the disarmament machinery. Each and every of the three fora established was assigned a particular role and mandate. Unfortunately some elements of the machinery have not only failed to live up to expectations but even produced no results at all in decades.

Chairperson,

We welcome improvements in the working methods of the first committee and applaud the bureau of last year’s session for their efforts. We look forward to using the new electronic co-sponsorship and speaker’s list system, but insist that co-sponsorship must also remain available in the conference room for colleagues having trouble signing on or without easy access to a computer. We also would encourage exploring further ways to include civil society more into our deliberations. The added value of strong inclusion has been shown time and again.

The UN Disarmament Commission (UNDC) managed to partially break its near 20-year deadlock by agreeing recommendations on voluntary trust-building measures in the area of conventional weapons. While we welcome this break-through under the able leadership of chair Lachezara Stoeva, we hope that the UNDC will now to be able to also make progress on the area of nuclear weapons, as well as finally take up a further topic and agree swiftly to recommendations thereon.
Chairperson,

Breaking the deadlock in the UNDC inspires hope that stalemates can indeed be overcome - if we do not lose sight of our purpose. The CD as the permanent negotiating body in the UN disarmament machinery is mandated to negotiate disarmament and arms control issues of great importance to international peace and security. Yet, the CD has not fulfilled its mandate for 21 years. It remains stuck at the pre-stage of even not agreeing on a mere Programme of Work. Discussions or exchange of views cannot substitute the substantive work the CD was mandated to tackle and which is its raison d'être. We need to go below the surface and have an honest look at the underlying reasons of the state of affairs.

The CD does not exist in a vacuum and urgently needs to adapt to today’s realities rather than be stuck in time. Due to the CD’s working methods, too much time has already been lost and many pressing issues needed to be addressed outside the CD. Austria has been a consistent supporter of the CD, but it is up to all CD members to ensure the CD’s continued relevance.

Austria firmly supports the CD to become a more inclusive forum. Opening ears and doors to all interested stakeholders would not only enhance its relevance and credibility, but most importantly bring new approaches to progress namely achieving any results.

Chairperson,

The continued standstill in the CD and only partial progress in the UNDC after 17 years show, how urgently we need a reform of the disarmament machinery. After the agreement during SSOD I, attempts to improve the machinery have not led to agreement. Encouragingly, under the able leadership of chair Fernando Luque, a compromise was reached on the holding of an SSOD IV, including a comprehensive review of the disarmament machinery. We thank NAM for tabling a resolution on the further path ahead. We encourage swift progress and will actively engage in consultations on the further way ahead. All states must seize this opportunity to bring the disarmament machinery into the 21st century and eliminate the procedural and structural road-blocks that have held up progress for far too long.
Thank you.