Statement
to the
Third Meeting of the Preparatory Committee
for the 2005 NPT Review Conference

Cluster i

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by

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Mr. Chairman,

As Ireland has already outlined the thrust of the European Union’s policy on cluster II, to which my delegation fully subscribes, I shall heed your call for brevity and focus on my intervention on a few issues to which Austria attaches particular importance.

Firstly, many delegations have deplored that little progress has been made since the 2000 Review Conference in the implementation of the thirteen steps agreed in the Final Document and that the noble goal of nuclear disarmament stipulated in Article VI still remains remote. We share this view. While some progress has been made in certain areas, the overall picture is in our view bleak and disappointing.

We also regret that some NPT Parties play down the significance of the 13 steps, maintaining that some are only long-term goals or that some have been overtaken by events. Let me stress once again that each of the 13 concrete steps has been the subject of intensive negotiations up to and throughout the 2000 Review Conference and that all NPT parties have at the time agreed to all of them. This does, of course, not mean that minor adjustments are excluded if these contribute to strengthening the respective step. The 13 steps are, however, not a plate from which nuclear weapon states can freely choose. All of the 13 steps are important and should have the full support of all NPT parties.

In this context, I wish to reiterate the importance of the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty (CTBT). With 171 signatures, the CTBT enjoys overwhelming support and approaches universality. Since last year’s PrepCom, 13 States have ratified the CTBT. We especially welcome the ratification by Algeria, an Annex 2 State, in July 2003 which brings us one step closer to its entry-into-force. It is of paramount importance that the political support to this landmark treaty does not waver. As is well known, the conclusion of a Comprehensive Nuclear Test-Ban Treaty was an essential element in gaining support from non-nuclear weapon states for the indefinite extension of the NPT at the Review and Extension Conference in 1995. This promise by the nuclear weapon states will only be fully honored if the CTBT enters into force.

Finally, Mr. Chairman, I would like to refer to the working paper on “Reductions of non-strategic nuclear weapons” which Sweden has introduced on behalf of Sweden, Ukraine and Austria. This is an important subject on which substantial progress must and can be made in the near future. The paper contains a number of concrete and modest proposals that can be implemented without major difficulties. We look forward to a fruitful discussion on this issue within the current review process with a view to make substantial recommendations to the NPT Review Conference in 2005.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman