Mr. Chairman,

As the distinguished Ambassador of Germany has outlined the position of the European Union in his statement under Cluster I, to which my delegation fully subscribes, and since we unfortunately have only little time for this debate, I shall limit my intervention at this PrepCom to the following three points.

1. Austria consistently has held the view that there is no contradiction between disarmament and non-proliferation. Both these tracks are mutually reinforcing and should be pursued, step by step, in parallel. We therefore call upon the Nuclear Weapons States (NWS) to honour the disarmament steps regarding nuclear disarmament that they have agreed to at the 2000 Review Conference.

Some progress has been made in certain areas. Nevertheless, the overall picture and some recent developments give rise to concern. In our opinion, this is a very short-sighted approach that clearly undermines the balance of the Treaty and, thus, also harms the chances of strengthening its non-proliferation aspects. The 13 steps are not a plate from which nuclear weapon states can freely choose. All plans to modernise, to undertake research to produce a “new generation” of nuclear weapons are diametrically in opposition to Art. 6 of the NPT and the commitments undertaken in 2000.

2. Austria wishes to build upon what has been agreed to in the area of nuclear disarmament in the year 2000 with a particular focus on the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty (CTBT), which enjoys overwhelming support with 177 signatures.

It is of paramount importance – and last year’s experience of the nuclear test announced by the DPRK has proven it once more - that the political support to this
landmark treaty does not waver. As is well known, the conclusion of a CTBT 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.

The upcoming Article XIV Conference in September here in Vienna will hopefully give a clear signal in this regard. Repeatedly, Austria appeals to the Annex II States to finally take this decisive step forward.

3. Of equal importance in our opinion is to start - without any further delay - the negotiations on a comprehensive Fissile Material Cut-Off Treaty. We see such a treaty as a key element for nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. However, we are not convinced by the arguments that have repeatedly been put forward that such a Treaty could not be effectively verifiable. In fact, an FMCT without a verification mechanism would largely be devoid of its purpose.

Mr. Chairman,

As I already mentioned, nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation are mutually reinforcing. There cannot be a comprehensive approach to address proliferation concerns without credible steps towards nuclear disarmament under the NPT. This is the key element of the Treaty's balance. This needs to be recognised finally and acted upon. Then, we are convinced, the NPT community would also be ready to address the non-proliferation challenges with the necessary urgency and with a greater sense of purpose.

As Foreign Minister Plassnik stressed on Monday last week, time has come to find a new consensus. We must use the opportunity provided by the review-cycle of the NPT that we are now starting here in Vienna to recommit ourselves to the Treaty in its entirety and ensure that it emerges strengthened and fit to address the challenges in front of us.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.