Mr. Chairman,
Distinguished delegates,

1) At the outset, I would like to congratulate you, Ambassador Feruta on your election as chair of this conference. You can count on the full support of the Austrian delegation. Austria aligns herself with the statements delivered on behalf of the EU and the Vienna Group of 10 during this Preparatory Committee.

2) Coming from the successful Review Conference in 2010, this review cycle started on a quite positive note in Vienna last year. The conclusions and recommendations for follow-on actions were an important accomplishment that provide us with a work plan until 2015. We are now at the halfway point to the next Review Conference and this Preparatory Committee is an opportunity to assess where we are in translating the agreed commitments into concrete results.

3) Austria shares the view that the implementation of the NPT is a collective responsibility of all NPT State Parties. Austria takes its responsibility seriously and tries to play an active role to realise the objectives of the NPT. Austria has submitted a national implementation report that provides detailed information about the activities Austria has undertaken to implement the 2010 Review Conference decisions including the Action Plan. We were also pleased to contribute to the working Papers submitted by the European Union and the Vienna Group of Ten. We will get back with more detailed statements on the different aspects during the cluster debates. I will limit my remarks today therefore to a few more general points underlining or complementing the points made on behalf of the European Union.

Mr. Chairman,

4) The NPT continues to be the cornerstone of the international nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation regime. It provides an important service for the international community and it needs to be protected and kept in good health. The health of the Treaty is not measured by the achievement or lack of achievement of a consensus document once every five years. It must be measured continuously by the total of actions of the NPT membership.

5) Unfortunately, we need to recognise that the credibility of the entire NPT and NPT-based regime is facing serious challenges. These challenges relate to all the different pillars of the NPT.

- Austria is a strong advocate of the goal of a world without nuclear weapons. We are, thus, deeply concerned about the credibility of implementation of the disarmament commitments. We see no credible signs of a real shift away from nuclear weapons, no signs of reducing the
salience of nuclear weapons. Instead we see steps being taken in all states that possess nuclear weapons that are indicative of an intent to retain nuclear weapons indefinitely.

- Austria is equally concerned about the reliability of the NPT as a means to prevent the proliferation of nuclear weapons. The actions of the DPRK are deeply worrying and seriously challenge the NPT edifice. The complex issue of the Iranian nuclear program, and if and how it can be resolved, will also have serious repercussions for the NPT. Universality of the NPT is a key ingredient for its credibility. However, this looks more and more distant. At the same time, we need to be concerned about what looks increasingly like an accelerating nuclear and missile arms race in Asia. Finally, the Middle East WMD Free Zone issue encompasses all these complexities and has the potential to impact very negatively on the NPT, if the process is not moved forward in a credible manner.

6) These – and other – issues together constitute the mix that determines the overall credibility of the Treaty. Austria has always advocated the view that both, nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation, need to be seen as two sides of the same coin, as mutually reinforcing concepts that can only be achieved together. “Words must mean something”, as President Obama put it in his often quoted Prague speech in 2009. The problem seems to be, though, that there is no agreement on what the words should mean. There are different and even conflicting views among the NPT membership on what we actually mean by nuclear disarmament or what we mean by the obligations and commitments under the NPT. There are underlying contradictions in the NPT, which have so far mostly been brushed over in vague consensus language that we managed to agree upon during past review cycles. However, we may be reaching a phase in the NPT where these contradictions put too much stress on the NPT that they can no longer be managed in this way. The NPT has served us well in the past decades. To serve us well in the future, we believe that the NPT membership needs to address these contradictions and different perceptions in order to retain its credibility as a key instrument of collective security.

Austria has been actively supporting recent multilateral initiatives aiming at advancing with multilateral nuclear disarmament and is convinced that efforts such as the Open-ended Working Group of the General Assembly or the High-level Meeting on nuclear disarmament could contribute valuably to build up momentum for nuclear disarmament and help to overcome the deadlock in multilateral nuclear disarmament negotiations. Austria also hopes that all states interested in nuclear disarmament will use the opportunity provided by the upcoming open-ended working group to enter into a more in depth discourse on ways of taking forward multilateral nuclear disarmament negotiations.

7) In this context, Austria is of the view that the discourse about nuclear weapons needs to be fundamentally changed. We will only manage the challenges posed by nuclear weapons if we move away from a debate that is still dominated by outdated military security concepts originating from cold war enemy and threat perceptions. Instead, we need to draw conclusions from our common understanding that any use of nuclear weapons would cause catastrophic consequences and be devastating in its effects for the whole world and all of humankind. The conference that took place on the topic of the humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons in Oslo in March was an important milestone in developing this discourse further and we look forward to continuing these discussions at future occasions. Austria was also pleased to working closely with other interested states on a joint statement for this Preparatory Committee.
Mr. Chairman,

8) Let me, finally, touch briefly on the third pillar. The Austrian position as regards nuclear energy is well known. We consider the generation of electricity through nuclear fission neither sustainable nor safe, and not a viable avenue in the combat of climate change. Austria has therefore renounced the use of nuclear power in its national energy mix. All the same, Austria fully respects the rights of all states to peaceful uses of nuclear energy as enshrined in the NPT. These rights, however, bring with them certain responsibilities and obligations. Austria has a strong interest that countries who choose to develop their capacities in the peaceful applications of nuclear energy do so under the highest safety, security and non-proliferation conditions, with the IAEA playing a central role in ensuring this objective.

Thank you