Statement by Austria

Mr. Chairman,

We would like to express our appreciation to you and your team for the hard work and effort that you have put in to bring us closer to a strong and credible outcome document from this committee.

We appreciate the challenge that you face. We also acknowledge that some of our concerns have been taken into account in document CRP4 Rev1. However, we are concerned by the fact that the document keeps getting weakened overall, in the face of an overwhelming majority calling for a strengthened document with clear obligations, concrete commitments and timelines. There are several underlying assumptions of the document that concern us as they seem to undermine what is enshrined in the Treaty itself and what has been agreed since. Let me point to particular examples:

- The overall assessment of the 2010 Action Plan has been that the nuclear disarmament related actions have failed to be implemented. Therefore the overwhelming majority of member States has demanded concrete benchmarks for the implementation over the next five years. How other do we expect to apply our lessons learnt and strengthen implementation over the next cycle? In spite of this strong call, the current draft does not contain any concrete timelines or benchmarks. Para 47 speaks of greater and accelerated efforts (...) including through the specification of concrete benchmarks and timelines, which we regard as essential, however in the following action-oriented points we only find at best words of encouragement to implement Treaty obligations “as soon as possible” or “in the current review cycle”. This is nowhere close to the clear demands of the overwhelming majority of the treaty membership. We would hence particularly request benchmarks to be included in the operative paragraph 47 points 3, 5, 6, 7 and 9 that reporting according to para 11 can be monitored against in a measurable way. As it was said by other delegations before, this is a standard proceeding for monitoring compliance in other treaties.
operative paragraph 47/4 and 5 in particular must be strengthened (they speak about “encourage”). Paragraph 7 about nuclear doctrines should instead of speaking about “reducing substantively or eliminating” say “reducing substantively AND eliminating”.

- Second, preambular paragraph 18 underlines the importance of practical steps for the full realization and effective implementation of Article VI. We reject this interpretation of Article VI that clearly, as confirmed by the ICJ legal opinion, is about legal measures. In this vein, Mr. Chairman, the concept of “practical building blocks” as referred to in operative paragraph 47/19 should be clearly separated from the necessary legal provisions for the full implementation of Article VI.

- Third, we note that there is a clear contradiction between the assertion that nuclear weapons would never be used again, as implied inter alia by op 47/8, which only talks about the unintended, unauthorized and accidental use, and the rejection of the demand by 159 countries to confirm that “it is in the interest of the very survival of humanity that nuclear weapons are never used again under any circumstances”. We request the re-insertion of this language. In this context, we highlight the importance of the issue of risk of nuclear weapon detonations to be duly recognized in the text and we note recent revelations about the protection of sensitive nuclear weapon sites.

- In operative paragraph 47/3, we highlight that the “unequivocal undertaking by nuclear weapon states” as agreed in 2000 clearly speaks about the “elimination” and not “reduction” of all types of nuclear weapons. This undertaking must not be watered down and we request the paragraph 47/3 to be amended accordingly. Further, we stress that there are no conditions for this unequivocal undertaking to be pursued, therefore we propose deletion of the language on international stability, peace and security and the principle of undiminished and increased security for all.

- In connection with operative paragraph 47/6, we note that the highly disturbing modernization programmes once more currently under way are not only not
criticized strongly enough but now the criticism is only limited to advanced new types. We have already proposed language to be included at the end of the paragraph that would read “in accordance with the Treaty obligations”.

Mr. Chairman,

The humanitarian conclusions that have been elaborated and presented in the course of this Review Cycle and are supported by an overwhelming majority of States, profoundly challenge the view that nuclear weapons can be seen as a tool to ensure security in the 21st century. Rather, nuclear weapons are seen by an increasing number of States as a high risk and ultimately irresponsible gamble based on an illusion of security and safety and as a threat to the security of all, NWS and NNWs alike.

NWS are so concerned that humanitarian initiative has the aim to make nuclear weapons illegal under international humanitarian law. In reality, though, it is not the legality of nuclear weapons that has emerged as the core issue or the key result of the humanitarian initiative. Rather, the legitimacy of nuclear weapons and a security approach based on nuclear deterrence are profoundly challenged by the findings of the humanitarian initiative. Nuclear weapons have catastrophic humanitarian consequences, their possession carries unacceptable risks, their use would be illegal - except maybe for a small range of largely hypothetical scenarios - and the combination of these factors together with the underlying readiness to commit mass destruction make them immoral.

These views are gaining significant ground in the international community, as evidenced currently at the NPT RevCon. It is highly problematic, if the NPT nuclear weapon States who also are the five permanent members of the United Nations Security Council [and their allies] continue advocate a security concept that is increasingly seen as illegitimate by the vast majority of States. Building the case for the illegitimacy of nuclear weapons based on their consequences and associated risks works as a powerful set of arguments for disarmament and non-proliferation alike. The humanitarian focus and the
resulting clear sense of urgency is thus maybe the best hope to shore up support for the NPT and to create and maintain a strong nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation regime. This is unfortunately not apparent in the current document that we are working on.

In this regard we also request para 30 to reflect that it is not only a majority of non-nuclear weapon States that has engaged on the issue of the humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons, it is the overwhelming majority, almost all have engaged on this issue.

Finally, Mr. Chairman, I would like to make an announcement with regard to the Austrian Pledge. We are extremely impressed by the strong level of support that our national pledge has received. Currently over 80 States have endorsed and/or supported this pledge with several more States indicating that they will do so in the coming days. We therefore consider it important to clarify that it is no longer a national pledge only but a pledge supported by almost half of the NPT membership. For this reason, we have included a revised Pledge Document on the website of the Austrian MFA to take the broad international support into account.

Mr. Chairman, we will submit our drafting suggestions also in writing to you. We also point to some further worries about language used in connection with the humanitarian consequences, such as “nuclear conflagration” that we suggest to be replaced by “nuclear weapon detonation”.

Thank you.