Mr. Chairman,
Excellencies, distinguished participants, ladies and gentlemen,

At the outset on behalf of the delegation of Kazakhstan I would like to thank the Government of Austria for having organized this important conference. We strongly believe that this Conference will greatly contribute to the further promotion of the humanitarian issue in the context of a nuclear weapons ban. We welcome the discussions that took place at the first and second conferences on the Humanitarian Impact of Nuclear Weapons, convened by Norway and Mexico. We also commend New Zealand’s contribution to promoting the Joint Statement on the Humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons adopted during the 69th UN General Assembly.

Mr. Chairman,
The people of Kazakhstan have experienced first-hand the devastating force and tragic consequences of nuclear weapons testing. Over a period of 40 years, from 1949 to 1989, the Semipalatinsk Nuclear Test Site was the Soviet Union’s prime venue for conducting about 500 nuclear weapons tests. 1.5 million people were exposed to high levels of radiation, the effects of which are still borne today by current generations. The territory of the test site was equal to the size of Slovenia and was contaminated by radioactive fallout. People and nature suffered from nuclear tests. The humanitarian imperative was the main driving force and generator of political will of the people and the President of Kazakhstan Nursultan Nazarbayev to take concrete actions to abolish nuclear weapons and related infrastructure on our territory.

President Nursultan Nazarbayev’s decision to close the Semipalatinsk nuclear test site on 29 August 1991 and voluntarily renounce the fourth-largest nuclear arsenal in the world are widely acknowledged. This was really an unprecedented example to the world to put the safety of the planet and the security of future generations before any misguided pursuit of the so-called “prestige” and “security” that nuclear weapons are wrongly thought to afford to those who possess them or are in the process of developing them.

This year marks the fifth anniversary of UN General Assembly Resolution 64/35, initiated by Kazakhstan, designating 29 August - the date of the official
closing of the Semipalatinsk nuclear test site - as the International Day against Nuclear Tests. The resolution calls for action to raise public awareness of the effects of nuclear tests and to ban nuclear testing.

To celebrate the International Day this year Kazakhstan hosted in its capital Astana on 29th August the 21st World Congress of the International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War. The main conclusion of their deliberations was that the consequences of nuclear explosions are unacceptable, cannot be adequately addressed by any country or organization, and that people affected by the explosions will bear long-term suffering.

In support of our joint efforts to ban nuclear tests, Kazakhstan has also launched project "ATOM" (Abolish Testing, Our Mission), an initiative aimed at informing the world community about the documented catastrophic humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons testing.

It is exactly 25 years since the last nuclear test was conducted in the Semipalatinsk region of Kazakhstan, but its consequences still have an impact on the condition of the population's health, ecology and the social development of the region. The Government of Kazakhstan is taking measures to overcome these consequences, but it will take a long time and will require significant financial resources to return to normal life. Kazakhstan, jointly with the UNDP, UNICEF, UNFPA, and the IAEA, is implementing a number of projects to rehabilitate and reconstruct the region.

Japan, Norway, the UK and other countries continue to provide assistance to the people of affected areas living in the Semipalatinsk region. The focus is on empowering the local rural population, including the most vulnerable, to enhance their own well-being and developing local self-governance capabilities through training. We are grateful to those countries for their generous support.

We are encouraged by the activity of the parliamentarians, mayors and civil society representatives to raise the issue of the humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons. On 29th August 2012 Kazakhstan jointly with the PNND hosted in Astana an international conference which called for establishing prohibitions against nuclear weapons through national legislatures and establishing guidelines that prohibit investment of public funds in enterprises engaged directly in the manufacture of nuclear weapons. Today we underline the importance of the work of parliamentarians and civil society in pursuing our common goal of building a nuclear-weapons-free world.

Mr. Chairman,

It is our strong conviction that only the total elimination of nuclear weapons may act as the only guarantee against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons. All efforts must be exerted to eliminate the threat of these weapons of mass
destruction and we believe that this Conference in Vienna will mark another milestone in our joint efforts to achieve a nuclear-weapon-free world.

Thank you for your attention.