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2005 NPT Review Conference

MAIN COMMITTEE III

Statement by
Ms. Christine Göstl

New York, 23 May 2005

Madame Chair,

Let me at the outset congratulate you for the assumption of your high post in this Conference and assure you of the full support of the Austrian delegation in your difficult task.

My delegation fully aligns with the statement held by Luxembourg on behalf of the European Union. Our statement therefore will focus on some selected additional thoughts which we think should be reflected in the outcome of this Conference. Let me in this context also refer to three Working Papers tabled by the Group of 10 for consideration in this Committee and introduced by my distinguished colleagues from Australia and the Netherlands during the last few days.

(Co-operation in the peaceful uses of nuclear energy)

Madame Chair,

Article IV of the NPT stipulates the inalienable right of all Parties to the Treaty to develop research, production and use of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes as long as such activities do not further any attempts towards the proliferation of nuclear weapons. In this connection we remain firmly committed to the agreements of the 1995 and 2000 Review Conferences, laid down in particular in paragraphs 14 to 19 of the 1995 Principles and Objectives document. Austria recognises that co-operation in the peaceful uses of nuclear energy constitutes one of the fundamental objectives of the Treaty.

My country has a very clear position vis-à-vis the utilization of nuclear power. The Austrian government holds the view that nuclear power does not contribute to sustainable development and therefore cannot play a key role for future energy policies. This position, at the same time, must not be misunderstood in the context of Article IV, in particular because of the wide framework this article offers.

The NPT is a well-crafted legal instrument with different balances, one between Articles III and VI, and the other, which is relevant here in this Main Committee, between Articles III and IV. As NNWS parties to the NPT have firmly committed themselves not to acquire any capabilities in nuclear weapons and submitted all their peaceful nuclear activities under international verification by the IAEA, we have to understand the other half of the coin to be equally important, namely the readiness to facilitate co-operation among States parties in the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. The NPT is directed towards providing a framework of confidence within which the exchange of technology can take place.

One principle that should loom highly in our considerations on the peaceful uses of nuclear energy is that a comprehensive safeguards agreement together with an additional protocol now represents the Agency's safeguards system pursuant to Article III.1 of the Treaty. In this regard, universal adherence to the Additional Protocol is a requirement for a stable, open and transparent international security environment in which peaceful nuclear cooperation can take place.

Madame Chair,

We would like to underline the role of the IAEA in assisting developing countries in the peaceful uses of nuclear energy through the development of effective programmes aimed at improving their scientific, technological, and regulatory capabilities. We commend the IAEA Secretariat for its efforts to enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of the Agency's technical co-operation programme and to ensure the continuing relevance of the programme to the changing circumstances and needs of recipient Member States.

It is important that the IAEA's resources for technical co-operation activities be assured, predictable, and sufficient to meet objectives mandated in Article IV, paragraph 2 of the Treaty and Article II of the IAEA Statute, and Austria urges Member States to make every effort to pay in full and on time their contributions to the Technical Co-operation Fund.

Austria herself is participating in the IAEA's Technical Co-operation Programme, in the areas of non-power application and safety. As host country of the IAEA Austria has been participating actively in these programmes, in particular by providing training possibilities in such fields as radiation protection, nuclear medicine, in agriculture, basic physics and radiochemistry. In addition Austria has been making available a number of scientists, who lecture in training courses or give practical advice in scientific projects in developing countries. In this context let me add that Austria pledges regularly her share for the voluntary technical co-operation fund and provides early payment in full.

(Transparency in Export Controls)

Madame Chair,

Let me touch briefly on the subject of export controls, as they are clearly linked to the debate on peaceful uses. Export controls are a sovereign responsibility - not only a right, but also an obligation - of each NPT Member State, deriving from Art. III.2 of the Treaty. They are an essential element of the NPT, an important means to ensure that exports of sensitive materials, equipment and technologies are subject to IAEA safeguards and will be used only for peaceful purposes. Thus export controls do not contradict the principle of access to nuclear technology for peaceful purposes. Their acceptance, however, depends very much upon the setting up and maintaining of clear criteria, transparent enough to be understood and providing sufficient predictability in their performance.

We are faced with complaints from developing countries that there is too little will among industrialized countries to co-operate in technical assistance and co-operation programmes, because of too stringent and unpredictable export policies. Although we do not share these complaints in detail, we still believe that we should listen to them and take them seriously. Export controls should happen in an atmosphere of co-operation and dialogue. Transparency is very important in this regard.

Therefore we commend the work done in this connection over the past five years. We commend the NSG for conducting intensive outreach activities, in which not only the supplier side can explain their positions, but a dialogue can take place on an equal footing. In the same spirit, the Zangger Committee has issued an outreach programme that includes the opening of a website with basic information on the role and purpose of the Committee, often referred to as the "NPT Exporters Committee". Let me in this connection also draw the Committee's attention to the information paper submitted to this Conference by the Zangger Committee and which is available as document NPT/Conf.2005/WP.15.

(Physical Protection of Nuclear Materials)

Although the physical protection of nuclear material is, like export controls, a theme that should be mainly dealt with in Main Committee II, we still believe that it also has an element in it that relates to Art. IV. My delegation is of the opinion that the application of proper physical protection standards by any recipient of nuclear material is a prerequisite for co-operation. Austria has participated very actively in the work that has been going on in the IAEA on improving the existing convention that deals with the physical protection of nuclear material while in international transit. We have always held the view that the original scope of this convention is too narrow and that we should widen it to include binding requirements for the domestic use, storage and transport of nuclear material. Taking the experience from other conventions, e.g. in the field of nuclear safety, what we need is a convention that gives guidance to member states how to set up a proper national system for physical protection. Therefore Austria like many other countries strongly advocates for a smooth adoption of the present amendment proposal, which in our view contains sufficient structure to meet these requirements. We are convinced that such a newly structured convention will be an incentive for more governments to adhere to it and use it as a legal basis for their domestic purposes.

Madame Chair,

We attach great importance to the work in this Committee and hope that our deliberations under your able guidance, Madame Chair, will lead to a successful result.

I thank you.

