

**UN Disarmament Commission 2008 - General exchange of views**  
**Austrian statement**

Mr Chairman,

Let me congratulate you on the assumption of this function at this critical juncture and express my delegation's full support for your work.

Austria associates itself with the statement made by the EU-Presidency (France) and wishes to stress the following additional points.

Austria has been and continues to be a longstanding supporter of disarmament, arms control and non-proliferation in both – the conventional and unconventional realm.

**Weapons of mass destruction**

Let us translate the euphemistic term of “non”- or “unconventional weapons” into what they actually are: Weapons of indiscriminate mass annihilation. It has now been more than one generation that has lived under the threat of weapons that can cause mass annihilation. Is this something worth passing on to the next generation? How can we justify to anyone outside our close-knit community of disarmament experts that after years of negotiations we have so far failed to rid our children from this abominable threat?

Austria fully shares the vision of a world free of weapons of mass destruction – a world free of nuclear weapons, chemical and biological weapons. We need verifiable and irreversible disarmament of the nuclear

arsenal, global adherence to the comprehensive nuclear test ban and a comprehensive cut-off of weapon grade fissile material.

Austria welcomes that more and more international politicians also from nuclear weapons states now believe – and have shared publicly their understanding – that nuclear weapons no longer serve as an effective legitimate deterrent but could become the ultimate source of global destruction. Austria welcomes these courageous statements and hopes that these voices are heard. In some instances recent developments in NWS give hope for progress.

For our part, we have tried to contribute to these positive developments. Austrian Foreign Minister Ursula Plassnik proposed some new ideas for the longstanding debate on the multilateralisation of the nuclear fuel cycle at last year's first session of the NPT Preparatory Committee in Vienna.

The dangers related with the increasing access to nuclear technology cannot be ignored for the sake of short-sighted focus on national economic interest, fears of limitation of state sovereignty or loss of control over a key technology sector. The time has come for new thinking in the light of new dramatic challenges. In our global world we not only share the benefits of our actions; we also share the catastrophic consequences of what we do or fail to do.

As you know Austria believes that because of the security and environmental risks, nuclear technology is no clean and safe energy

source. Already in 1999 the Austrian Parliament passed a constitutional law banning the production of nuclear energy on its territory. We firmly believe in the need to develop alternative sustainable and safe forms of clean energy. We acknowledge, however, that other States will resort to nuclear energy to partially cover their energy needs and that – just as other energy sources – the use of nuclear energy will rise in the next years. We believe that it is time to design a framework suited to the nuclear realities of the 21st century and to restrict enrichment and reprocessing exclusively to facilities under multilateral control. These limitations would need to be accompanied by proper rules of transparency and by an assurance that legitimate users could get their supplies.

In the last couple of years there has been considerable interest in the idea of creating such a new framework. The IAEA and several States have proposed a variety of interesting approaches, some focusing on the establishment of facilities under international control others on guarantee-mechanisms to assure the supply of nuclear fuel.

We believe an initial step could be to entrust the IAEA to serve as a virtual broker for all transactions in the civilian nuclear fuel cycle. Every buyer – even if it is next door to the seller must buy fuel through the IAEA. This would provide immediate internationally shared transparency. Gradually, this transparency could be supplemented with control rights of the agency over the enrichment and reprocessing facilities. In the long term, increasing these control rights should transform all enrichment and reprocessing facilities from national to essentially multilateral operations under the

auspices of the IAEA. It goes without saying that any new facilities would, right from the beginning, be multilateral IAEA-controlled operations.

There could be concern that by ceding control, the companies operating the facilities would be de facto nationalized and the huge investments into the technology would be lost. That is not true. The companies would continue to run the facilities, they would continue to reap the profits. The IAEA would simply take on the tasks currently exercised by states or regional organizations – to monitor operations and to ensure that buyers fulfill non-proliferation requirements. But through the IAEA we would be doing that job, monitoring and verification, together.

There could be concern that multilateralization could undermine developing countries' access to the peaceful use of nuclear energy – which is, after all, a right enshrined in Article IV of the NPT. That concern also is not warranted. All States fully maintain their NPT-rights. But having a right also gives the owner the possibility to decide to use it exclusively together with other states or through an international organisation. By entrusting the IAEA to control and monitor the facilities, we are in fact, making joint use of our right and benefiting from the peaceful use of nuclear technology together in a fair and equal manner.

It is important to understand that the Austrian proposal precisely tries to counter the oft derided division into haves and have nots. The confidence crisis about the use of civilian nuclear technology can only be overcome by establishing an international system that is fair and treats all states equal. This goal can be achieved by an arrangement wherein all states agree not

to operate enrichment and reprocessing facilities individually and to transform all existing facilities into multilateral ones under the control and supervision of the international community.

Considerable advantages – in safety, security, non-proliferation and in cost - could accrue. A joint facility places all participants under a greater degree of scrutiny, which strengthens non-proliferation and security. A “breakout” by the host would be more difficult than in the case of a nationally controlled entity. New facilities would only have to be built for economic reasons, not for reasons of strategic politics or national pride. As a consequence there would be fewer facilities – just as many as the market requires. Having fewer sites to watch means, in turn, that with a given amount of resources the IAEA is in a position to monitor more carefully.

Austria is well aware that this is an ambitious proposal. But if we are truly at the beginning of a renaissance of nuclear energy, as many experts tell us, we have to act now. And let us not forget: that ambitious as the proposal may seem, it is not new and it has, on a regional level, been done before. We would in fact be reinvesting in the successful ideas that lie at the root of European integration: Over fifty years ago, the founding members of today’s European Union placed potentially dangerous substances and technologies – coal, steel and nuclear technology - under the control of joint, multilateral institutions. It seems appropriate to take up these ideas now and promote a multilateralization of the nuclear fuel cycle.

Mr Chairman,

It must be stressed, of course, that multilateral approaches to the nuclear fuel cycle remain complementary to the primary non-proliferation instruments of effective and universal implementation of IAEA safeguards, including the Additional Protocol, and effective export controls, as well as the vital disarmament and non-proliferation instruments like the CTBT and the FMCT.

### **Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty (CTBT)**

A word about the CTBT: The entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty is long overdue.

Last year, Austria together with Costa Rica assumed the Presidency of the Fifth Conference on Facilitating the Entry into Force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (Art. XIV Conference). In this capacity we continue raising awareness about the CTBT and the scientific civil applications of its International Monitoring System such as the tsunami early-warning-system. We hope that a better understanding of the overall benefits of the CTBT will help speed up national ratification processes and its entry into force. To that end Austria sponsored several CTBTO Workshops, such as for Caribbean and Pacific States.

Recent positive developments such as the ratifications by Barbados, Columbia and Malaysia indicate that there is currently a dynamic towards ratification. We call on all states who have not done so yet to sign and ratify the CTBT.

### **Prevention of Missile Proliferation**

Mr Chairman,

The threat posed by weapons of mass destruction rises exponentially with the development of advanced delivery systems. Austria believes that the time is ripe to establish within the United Nations a **multilateral missile control arrangement**. The Joint Statement made by the Russian Federation and the United States, on October 25, 2007, before the First Committee on the proposal to multilateralize the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty (INF Treaty) could serve as a basis for such a new arms control treaty.

Until then, the **Hague Code of Conduct against Ballistic Missile Proliferation** of 2002 serves as the only normative international instrument for verification against the proliferation of ballistic missiles. Austria has been committed to its goals since its inception and serves as the Executive Secretariat of the Code. As such we have hosted six Meetings of the Subscribing States. More than two-thirds of UN member states subscribed to the Code as called for by UN General Assembly Resolution 60/62 and I hope that more will join. It is paramount, however, that States contribute positively to this confidence building instrument and fully comply with all its obligations. I call especially on the USA and Russia to demonstrate leadership in this regard.

## **Conventional weapons**

### **Cluster Munitions**

Mr Chairman,

Let me now turn briefly to conventional weapons. Austria, together with other countries, strives to conclude by the end of this year a legally binding

instrument to prohibit cluster munitions that cause unacceptable harm to civilians. A ban on cluster munitions furthers the cause of disarmament, strengthens humanitarian principles and will contribute substantially to save the lives, limbs and livelihoods of many civilians.

To raise awareness about the grave problems regarding cluster munitions, Austria organized the Vienna Conference on Cluster Munitions in December 2007 at which 138 states participated. This conference – together with other such meetings in Oslo, Lima, Belgrade, Costa Rica, Wellington, Livingstone, and the conferences planned in the next weeks in Mexico City and Bangkok – serve the preparation of a diplomatic conference in Dublin starting 19 May. We encourage all countries to actively participate at this conference to achieve a robust Convention on Cluster Munitions which will make a real difference in preventing future harm to civilians.

But as regards cluster munitions not only the Austrian diplomats have been busy. Late last year the Austrian Parliament adopted a national law which foresees a comprehensive ban of cluster munitions. It prohibits the development, production, supply, sale, procurement, import, export, transit, use and possession of cluster munitions and provides for the destruction of national stockpiles by January 2011. The Austrian law contains no exceptions for so-called “smart cluster bombs” weapons or exceptions for weapons with a low number of sub-munitions.

When all stocks have been destroyed in 3 years, Austria will be cluster-munitions-free. This is disarmament in concrete terms which we believe is best suited to build confidence among states.

### **Anti-personnelmines**

Another central area of Austrian Foreign policy at the intersection of disarmament and humanitarian policies is the prohibition of anti-personnelmines (APMs). Since its adoption, Austria lends full support to the Mine Ban Treaty. Austria served as the presidency of the first Review Conference of the Convention in 2004 and in 2007 we acted as co-chair of the Mine Ban Treaty's Committee for Victim Assistance. Austria continues to support the Mine Ban Process to:

- achieve universal adherence
- improve international cooperation
- improve assistance for victims
- support the clearance of mine-affected areas
- assist states in their efforts to eliminate mines.

### **SALW**

Mr Chairman,

let me conclude with an issue that must not go unmentioned in the context of this debate. Both together with our EU-partners and individually, Austria strives to constructively support the fight against the illicit accumulation and trafficking of small arms and light weapons (SALW).

The availability of and easy access to small arms and light weapons has terrible consequences:

- crime,
- terrorism,
- destabilisation of state structures and societies,
- national and international conflict.

We encounter human rights violations, as well as long-term displacement and poverty. Small arms contribute to undermining the attempts of millions of people to enjoy development opportunities in peace and security.

What have we done? Austria directly supports the destruction of small arms and light weapons' stockpiles and ammunitions in Ukraine, Kazakhstan and Albania.

In Africa, the continent most heavily affected by the uncontrolled spread of SALW, we support the strengthening of national legal regimes and capacity building as well as practical disarmament measures through financing three projects with 530.000 Euro. These projects are implemented by the UN Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa and are designed to benefit the member states of ECOWAS, the "Small Arms Transparency and Control Regime in Africa " as well as the Central African region.

Mr. Chairman,

Over the past years we have often resorted to pointing at others and giving good advice about what others should do. This will lead us nowhere. We all will have to make individual efforts so that we can all be successful together. I have tried to outline what Austria – a small neutral country -- is doing, and of course, we will try to do more.

I hope that this year's Disarmament Commission will contribute constructively to real disarmament and conduct a productive session.

Thank you.