

**2018 Preparatory Committee for the 2020 Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty  
Review Conference  
April 23 – May 4, 2018 in Geneva**

**General Debate  
Statement Austria**

**Check against delivery**

Mister Chairman,

At the outset let me congratulate you on assuming the chairmanship over this important conference. I assure you of the full support of the Austrian delegation in your efforts to steer this meeting towards a successful outcome.

Austria aligns herself with the statement of the European Union. We would like to make the following additional remarks from the national perspective, which is from the point of view of a dedicated State party which regards the NPT as the cornerstone of the international nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation regime, and which has been always guided by a sincere desire to further strengthen this important treaty.

Mister Chairman,

Since the PrepCom's previous meeting in Vienna in 2017, we have seen further nuclear and ballistic missile tests by the DPRK in violation of a number of Security Council resolutions. Austria has been consistent in condemning in the strongest terms this utterly unacceptable and irresponsible behaviour. We call on the DPRK to stop immediately all prohibited activities, to return to the NPT and to resume full cooperation with the IAEA. The DPRK is called upon to accede to the CTBT, as are all other States which have not yet done so and in particular the other remaining countries of the annex II of that treaty.

Austria firmly believes that only peaceful means can achieve progress towards our shared goal of the denuclearisation of the Korean Peninsula and we hope that ongoing diplomatic efforts will contribute towards compliance with the international system, which is of utmost importance to my country. The example of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action of 2015 regarding the Iranian nuclear programme demonstrates that a negotiating approach actually bears fruit. Now it is imperative that all parties to the JCPOA continue to implement what has been the most significant achievement in the area of nuclear non-proliferation for many years. The JCPOA can provide inspiration for a future settlement of the Korean situation, when the recent encouraging signals will have brought about real negotiations. Austria has a strong national record on non-proliferation. We have both a comprehensive safeguards agreement and an additional protocol with the IAEA in place.

Rigorous implementation and continuous improvement of the international non-proliferation framework is essential to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons to additional States or possibly other actors. Unfortunately, there is continued existence of nuclear weapons in some States, and the argument heard from these States that nuclear weapons are indispensable for their national security, creates an incentive for some other countries to pursuing nuclear weapons programmes themselves. This is why non-proliferation cannot credibly be pursued without progress on nuclear disarmament in parallel. The interdependence was understood clearly by the drafters of the NPT, and it should be borne in mind by all of us today as well.

Mister Chairman,

In this light it is important to remind ourselves that article VI of the NPT and the associated preambular paragraphs establish a clear obligation for nuclear disarmament with the finality of a nuclear weapon free world. The thirteen practical steps towards nuclear disarmament agreed at the NPT RevCon in 2000, as well as the disarmament related parts of the Action Plan agreed at the NPT RevCon in 2010, detail concrete actions to implement this obligation and to proceed towards this ultimate goal which we all share and to which we have committed ourselves.

Austria appreciates past progress on nuclear disarmament such as the completion of the objectives under the new START treaty. But we are also aware that on balance very little of the important nuclear disarmament measures agreed in the NPT framework have actually been implemented. It is the purpose of this meeting to measure progress in the implementation of these commitments. Alas, we are witnessing today a reversal of attitudes towards nuclear disarmament in many quarters. On the diplomatic front, some attempts have been observed lately to backtrack on parts of the NPT acquis. All the more important it is to reaffirm today that all of these agreements, which were reached as the result of diplomatic efforts, remain of course fully valid until they all have been implemented. We will come back to the issue of the state and prospects for nuclear disarmament in more detail during the thematic debate on cluster I.

Mister Chairman,

Zooming in on the period since the last Review Conference in 2015, the progress of the international discussions about the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons proceeding from the outcome of the NPT RevCon in 2010 has certainly been a momentous development in nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. These discussions have accumulated evidence how any use of a nuclear weapon would have a disastrous, far-reaching and long-term impact. Let me draw delegates' attention to the working paper on this very issue submitted to this Committee by Austria along with some twenty other States.

In light of the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons, the current re-emergence of the concept of limited nuclear war in the strategic thinking in some nuclear weapon States is particularly worrying. If States give in to the dangerous illusion that nuclear war may be constrained in its impact and ultimately won, they will achieve nothing but to further increase the risk of a catastrophe actually occurring. Let me recall that in preambular paragraph one of the NPT we all have signed up to do the contrary, namely to making every effort to avert such a danger.

Mister Chairman,

The humanitarian considerations have become also an important factor for the negotiations and adoption in 2017 by 122 countries, among them my own, of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW). The treaty is an impressive manifestation of the view of the large majority of the world's States that nuclear weapons, far from providing security, due to the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of their use, are actually an existential threat for humanity. Let me draw delegates' attention to a working paper Austria has submitted to this Committee dealing in some more detail with the security implications of nuclear weapons from an up-to date point of view taking full account of the important international discussions of the last couple of years.

As an important contribution to implementing article VI, the TPNW is fully consistent with the NPT, the cornerstone of the international nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation regime, and strengthens the implementation of Art. VI. Like the CTBT and hopefully soon an FMCT, the TPNW is one of the effective legal measures necessary for the fulfilment of article VI.

Other measures to promote the implementation of article VI should include, inter alia, on the part of the nuclear weapon States, and in line with existing agreed commitments in the NPT framework, further reductions of weapons, measures to reduce their role in military doctrines instead of enhancing their usability through on-going modernisation programmes, and risk reduction.

Mister Chairman,

Let me conclude by a short remark on peaceful uses. Austria fully acknowledges the inalienable right to peaceful uses of nuclear energy as established by article IV of the NPT. This does however not entail a commitment of States party to the NPT to use nuclear energy for power generation, or to support and promote such use by others. Rather, the UN Conference on Sustainable Development held in Rio de Janeiro in 2012 favoured national policies using an appropriate energy mix based on individual national circumstances. In line with this principle, Austria has chosen not to use nuclear energy for power generation. It is our assessment that the risk of accidents at nuclear power stations, as exemplified e.g. by the tragic incidents in Tschernobyl and more recently Fukushima, is bigger than the potential benefits this particular application of nuclear energy brings. Also the problem of the safe and long-term disposal of radioactive waste has not been solved yet in a satisfactory manner. And especially with regard to the current trend to introduce nuclear power into some energy-rich regions where it has not been present yet, let us not forget that historically peaceful programmes have in a number of cases been the point of departure for military nuclear programmes. States that do choose to use nuclear energy for power generation notwithstanding should do so applying the highest standards of safety, security, waste management and non-proliferation possible.

Mister Chairman,

Let me conclude by reiterating my delegation's full support for you. I am confident that under your able leadership, this Committee will have fruitful discussions which will facilitate further progress as we approach the Review Conference in 2020.