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Statement

by

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of the Republic of Austria

at

the 63rd Session of the

United Nations General Assembly

New York, 26 September 2008

Mr. President, Ladies and Gentlemen,

1. These days, images of thousands of parents concerned about the health of their babies and children remind us about what lies at the heart of our work: to **build a better future for the coming generations** – at home as well as here in the United Nations.

2. Armed conflicts, climate change, poverty, hunger, and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction are the bleak **challenges** we face today, together with new global challenges such as increasing food and energy prices as well as financial turbulences. A sense of **shared responsibility** and **true partnership** based on equality are the **key qualities** that must guide us in our efforts to meet these challenges.

3. All inhabitants of the global village have the right and the duty to contribute to the wellbeing of our community. At the global level this needs to be done in the framework of an **effective World Organization** that enjoys the **trust** of states and governments but also of societies and individual citizens.

4. A just and effective international order needs to be based on rules equally applicable to every member, big or small, strong or weak. Respect for the **Rule of Law** is indispensable if we want to prevent conflicts and promote peace and sustainable development. Austria has therefore consistently promoted efforts to develop international relations based on the principles of the UN Charter and all the other instruments that form our international legal system.

Mr. President,

5. Three weeks ago, 130 **human rights** experts and practitioners from around the world came together in Vienna fifteen years after the 1993 Vienna World Conference on Human Rights. They formulated recommendations on how to overcome the gap between human rights standards and the reality of their implementation on the ground. These recommendations have been submitted to the General Assembly and the Human Rights Council, and I hope they will contribute to the deliberations on the occasion of the 60th anniversary of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights on 10th of December.

6. One of the basic threats to the rule of law is **impunity**. Today, international criminal justice, as provided by the ICC as well as by the special tribunals established by the Security Council, has become a major tool for bringing to **justice** those responsible for war crimes and crimes against humanity. Nowadays, some speak about the “peace – justice dilemma”. I remain convinced that peace and justice are complementary objectives, both equally essential: There can be no lasting peace without justice, and international justice will serve its purpose most effectively if it helps societies advance reconciliation and overcome the wounds of the past. As the often most vulnerable in our societies, women and children deserve our special attention in this context.

Mr. President,

7. No country, no society can succeed without recognizing the contribution of **women**. Worldwide, women are the politically and socially most relevant “**emerging power**” of the 21st century. Their contribution must be valued publicly, their participation encouraged, their potential fully used. There are countless success stories of women leaders who make a difference in their community, as business women, mothers, teachers, farmers, workers, peace-makers, and law-makers.

8. At the same time – and around the world – we hear appalling reports of discrimination and **violence against women**. How can we speak of human rights for women, as long as one out of every three women worldwide has been beaten or abused? It is the responsibility of each and every government to act on this. The **United Nations** must **take the lead** by setting **clear targets** and establishing a network to share best practices in combating violence against women.

9. Last year, the **Women Leaders Network** called on the Secretary-General to appoint more women to leadership positions in the United Nations, in particular in mediation and peace-building. I am pleased that Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon has since entrusted a number of outstanding women both with key positions at Headquarters and in the field and I encourage him to continue this policy.

10. With regard to UN Security Council **Resolution 1325** on Women, Peace and Security, the EU policy of targeted support to women in and

through peace missions could be extended to other regional organisations such as the African Union. To assess the results of resolution 1325 I propose a thorough review process on the occasion of its 10th anniversary in 2010.

Mr. President,

11. Recent events in **Georgia** are a stark reminder that the scourge of war still haunts our European neighbourhood. The European Union is ready to work together with OSCE, the Council of Europe and the United Nations so that Georgia returns to peace, all internally displaced people can return safely and a lasting solution based on the full respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Georgia is found. I also call upon the Security Council to decide on a timely prolongation of UNOMIG.

12. As for the **Western Balkans**, I am heartened that we are moving from the crisis management phase to the integration phase. Today, thanks to the stabilising role of the European Union, the peoples of the Western Balkans enjoy peace. Their future lies in the European Union.

13. Austria welcomes the progress recently achieved in **Zimbabwe**. We hope that this will become another lasting example of the capacity of Africa for the peaceful resolution of conflicts on its continent. Regional ownership is the best option for success.

14. Austria continues to actively support efforts to bring an end to decades of conflict in the **Middle East**. Three months ago, Austria hosted a donors' conference in Vienna for the reconstruction of the Nahr El Bared Refugee Camp in Northern Lebanon in order to improve the fate of the Palestinian refugees and to support stability, rule of law and economic development in Lebanon.

15. I commend the Israeli and Palestinian leadership for their commitment to dialogue and negotiations in spite of repeated efforts by **radical forces** to undermine the process started in Annapolis nearly a year ago. Ongoing settlement expansion puts our common vision in question. The "two-state-solution" remains the only possible path towards a peaceful and prosperous Middle East that can provide lasting security to all its inhabitants.

16. I remain convinced that, in international relations as inside our own societies, we must always support **dialogue**. Austria will continue her longstanding commitment to the dialogue of cultures and religions with a clear focus on the contribution of religious leaders, women, young people, the media and educators.

Mr. President,

17. With some 500.000 victims each year, **small arms and light weapons** (SALW) are today's "*real weapons of mass destruction*". **Africa** is the continent most heavily affected by this problem. Together with her African partners, Austria works for real progress on the destruction of small arms as

well as on the fight against illicit arms trade. We also cooperate in developing suitable legal instruments.

18. Austria is also deeply involved in establishing an international legally binding ban on **cluster munitions**. The Convention on Cluster Munitions that we adopted in Dublin this May is a milestone in the field of disarmament and humanitarian law. Austria will sign the Convention in Oslo on 3 December 2008. I appeal to all other countries to sign as soon as possible so that this treaty can enter into force swiftly.

19. The need to **prevent nuclear proliferation** at a time when an increasing number of countries are looking towards nuclear power as a means to produce energy calls for courageous and creative solutions. Austria has presented a proposal in the framework of the NPT and the IAEA which aims at the comprehensive **multilateralisation of the nuclear fuel cycle**. The goal is a fair system under which all States who wish to receive nuclear fuel for an exclusively peaceful usage can do so under equal conditions through the IAEA.

20. With regard to the **Iranian nuclear programme** we are convinced that the double-track approach is the best way forward. At the same time, it is indispensable that Iran fully complies with the relevant Security Council resolutions. In this context we commend and strongly support the efforts of IAEA Director General El Baradei.

Mr. President,

21. Let me draw your attention to the new partnership we developed and adopted at the Lisbon Summit in December 2007: the **Joint Africa - EU Strategy** based on the three aims of peace, security and development.

22. Without peace and security there can be no sustainable development and there is no security without **human security**. Human trafficking, drugs, proliferation of weapons, unemployment and crime – they all affect the very cohesion of our societies.

23. In order to better address the challenges faced by Africa, Austria – together with ECOWAS and SADC respectively – recently organized a Conference on Peace and Security in West Africa in Ouagadougou and a Seminar on Peace and Development in Southern Africa in Johannesburg.

Mr. President,

24. We need the turbo **power of innovation** to address global challenges. **Climate Change** is not only responsible for natural disasters but poses what is perhaps the most serious threat to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.

25. For some **small island states** climate change and the resulting sea level rise is a threat to their very existence. Austria therefore welcomes the initiative by the Pacific Island States for a General Assembly resolution on the threat of climate change to international peace and security.

26. Urgent action towards a global climate agreement by the end of 2009 is the only way forward. We also propose to develop the United Nations Environment Program into a fully fledged **World Environment Organization**. Furthermore, we support the creation of a new **International Renewable Energy Agency**. Vienna is a suitable location to host such an agency as many of its UN offices already now deal with energy questions.

Mr. President,

27. Eradicating extreme **poverty and hunger** continues to be one of the main challenges of the international community. At the midpoint towards 2015, success in achieving the Millennium Development Goals has been uneven. While many countries have made significant progress in attaining some of the Goals, only a few countries are likely to reach all of them. Urgent and increased efforts by the international community are therefore needed. The active contribution towards this global effort is a priority for the Austrian government.

28. As a matter of urgency we also have to tackle the multiple and complex causes of the current **global food crisis**. We welcome the High Level Task Force set up by Secretary General Ban Ki-moon which aims at creating an international strategy for food security and impatiently await first concrete results.

Mr. President,

29. **Small and medium-sized countries** have a specific interest in an international system based on effective multilateralism and the rule of law. They form the backbone of the United Nations. They can make a difference and act as driving force on many issues beneficial to the world community.

30. Since joining the United Nations more than 50 years ago Austria has constantly worked for **multilateral solutions to global challenges**. Our candidature for a non-permanent seat on the United Nations **Security Council** is one expression of our determination to serve the World Organization. This is the most important responsibility that can be entrusted to a member of the United Nations. We stand ready to assume this responsibility and ask you for your support. We will work for common solutions to our common global challenges in a **sense of true partnership**.