

DELEGATION OF AUSTRIA

2005 NPT Review Conference

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Head of Delegation

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Mr. President,

This is the “1st NPT Conference without our colleague and friend Fritz Schmid as member of the Austrian delegation. Dr. Schmid has been the long-term chair of the Zangger Committee. His passing away early this year has left a great void in the international non-proliferation community. I appreciate the many condolences and expressions of appreciation about his outstanding contribution to the NPT-process.

Austria is extremely pleased about your election as President and we wish you all success. We remember your very successful tenure as Ambassador of Brazil to Vienna and to the IAEA and CTBTO. We highly respect the way you are fulfilling your tasks as President of our Conference.

Austria fully aligns itself with the statement made by Luxemburg on behalf of the European Union. I will, therefore, limit my comments to a few general observations and to our expectations for this Conference.

I would like to thank the previous speakers for their statements which have given us a good understanding of the positions of States Parties to the Treaty.

Mr. President,

The NPT is a unique international legal instrument. Its aim is not only to prevent the proliferation of nuclear weapons, it also includes a legal commitment to their elimination and regulates the access to nuclear energy for peaceful purposes. It is undoubtedly the key non-proliferation and disarmament treaty. It has served the international community well in the past 35 years.

The NPT and its indefinite extension of 1995 is the result of a careful bargain and of balancing the three pillars: non-proliferation, disarmament and peaceful use of nuclear energy. This integrity of the Treaty is challenged. The balance between these three pillars risks being tilted.

Nuclear know-how and access to technology are becoming ever more available. The demand for nuclear energy is increasing. While the overwhelming majority of non-nuclear-weapon states comply with their non-proliferation obligations under the Treaty, there have been alarming cases of proliferation and non-compliance. At the same time progress in nuclear disarmament still eludes us. We were optimistic after the 2000 Review Conference that the NPT-community would be working together with a common sense of purpose. Instead, States Parties are grappling with a crisis of confidence.

We must use the opportunity provided by this Review Conference to recommit ourselves to the Treaty in its entirety and ensure that it emerges strengthened and fit to cope with the challenges of our time.

Austria hopes that this Conference will address the three pillars of the Treaty. We will make every effort to produce a balanced outcome. This would mean a Final Document that strengthens the non-proliferation and the disarmament aspects of the Treaty and an outcome which cannot be perceived as denying access to nuclear energy for those who want to use it for peaceful purposes.

Progress in non-proliferation and a strong commitment to enforce compliance with the Treaty obligations is urgently needed. Progress in this field will be possible if there are also tangible results in nuclear disarmament.

As Secretary General Kofi Annan in his report "In larger Freedom" states: "Progress in both disarmament and non-proliferation is essential and neither should be held hostage to the other."

The conference is to review the three pillars of the NPT inclusive of commitments of the review process. The so-called 13 steps towards nuclear disarmament of 2000 remain important commitments.

The Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) enjoys overwhelming support with 175 signatures. As is well known, the conclusion of a CTBT was an essential element in gaining support from non-nuclear weapon states for the indefinite extension of the NPT at the Review and Extension Conference in 1995. This promise made by the nuclear weapon states will only be effectuated if the CTBT enters into force. Austria highly appreciates the work of the Provisional Secretariat and the Executive Secretary. We also acknowledge the value added of the monitoring system in being able to provide data for the prediction of natural disasters.

Of equal importance is to start the negotiations on a comprehensive Fissile Material Cut-Off Treaty. We see such a treaty as a key element for nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament. An FMCT without a robust verification regime would be devoid of its purpose and would raise questions about the commitment of those who are the main addressees of such a treaty.

Our concern that nuclear weapons are still central to strategic planning is increased by reports of intentions to develop new nuclear weapons or alter their design for new uses. Even the affirmation that only concepts are being studied is not reassuring.

Since the end of the Cold War important measures of nuclear disarmament were taken. However, over 30.000 nuclear warheads still exist according to recent estimates, about the same number when the treaty came into force 35 years ago. A large number of nuclear weapons are still on "hair trigger alert". De-alerting, like the United Kingdom has done, would substantially reduce the risk of a military nuclear operation by mistake or accident.

We must spare no efforts to enforce compliance and to prevent the proliferation of nuclear weapons and nuclear materials. The key measures to this effect are to strengthen the IAEA safeguards system, export controls, and to ensure the physical protection of nuclear materials.

In this regard the Agency and its Director General deserve tribute for the way they are fulfilling their task.

Austria considers the Additional Protocol to be an integral part of the IAEA's safeguards system. For us, the conclusion of an additional protocol is mandatory under Article Art III of the Treaty and should be made a condition of supply.

Efficient export controls and enforcement are needed to assure that the nuclear items supplied would not be diverted from peaceful uses to non-peaceful ones including terrorist or black market purposes.

In May 2004, the Austrian Foreign Minister submitted an amendment proposal to the Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Material to the IAEA Director General on behalf of 24 States Parties with the request to convene a diplomatic conference for its adoption. A Diplomatic Conference has now been scheduled for July 2005 in Vienna. We are optimistic that this Conference will approve the amendment proposal, thus providing an important contribution to the physical protection of nuclear material and nuclear facilities.

The report commissioned by the IAEA Director General on possible multilateral approaches to the nuclear fuel cycle deserves wide attention. Austria looks forward to discussions on this report. One of its options is that the IAEA could act as a guarantor of nuclear fuel supply to civil nuclear users. This could be an incentive for States to voluntarily forgo the development of domestic uranium enrichment and plutonium reprocessing capacities.

As regards Institutional reform, in addition to the Canadian suggestion of holding annual meetings the value of establishing an administrative and technical unit servicing the international process should be considered by the Conference.

We welcome the statements by Presidents Bush and Putin on the 35th anniversary of the entry into force of the Treaty.

President Bush reaffirming “the determination of the United States to carry out its treaty commitments and to work to insure its continuance in the interest of world peace and security”.

President Putin stating “Russia strictly complies with all of its disarmament obligations. We have been successfully implementing relevant agreements and we stand ready to take further constructive steps.”

Mr. President,

A world free of nuclear weapons and, as it were, of all weapons of mass destruction is the aim and goal of Austrian policy. This cannot be achieved tomorrow. It will require a patient multilateral endeavour, step by step, beginning with a reduction of nuclear threats that will eventually, irreversibly and transparently lead to the complete elimination of all nuclear arsenals.

We concur with others that we must begin to seek an alternative system of collective security in which nuclear deterrence does not figure and in which the supply and demand side are equally addressed.

The predictions at the 2000 Review-Conference, when I was standing at this rostrum, were pessimistic and yet, we managed to agree on a strong Final Document. Five years later, today, it is up to us to prove the pessimists wrong again. It is up to us to find agreement on a Final Document to revitalize the long-term vision of a world free of nuclear weapons.

On April 11, 1955, one week before his death, 50 years ago and 10 years after Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Einstein writes the last signed letter to Bertrand Russel agreeing to sign a joint manifesto urging all Nations to renounce nuclear weapons.

A few years earlier, in 1946, Einstein was quoted as saying – and this holds true for our Conference:

“The unleashed power of the Atom Bomb has changed everything except our modes of thinking and thus we drift towards unparalleled catastrophes”.

I thank you for your attention.