

## CONTRIBUTION BY AUSTRIA

### UNGA RESOLUTION 79/241 ON A COMPREHENSIVE STUDY OF THE QUESTION OF NUCLEAR-WEAPON-FREE ZONES IN ALL ITS ASPECTS

Austria welcomes the opportunity to submit its views on resolution [79/241](#) “Comprehensive study of the question of nuclear-weapon-free zones in all its aspects” adopted by the General Assembly on 24 December 2024, which Austria co-sponsored.

Austria is a staunch supporter of nuclear-weapon-free-zones (NWFZs) and convinced of their crucial contribution to promote global and regional peace and security, strengthen the nuclear non-proliferation regime and contribute to the achievement of nuclear disarmament objectives.

In 1999, Austria adopted a “Federal Constitutional Law on a nuclear-free Austria”, (StF: [BGBl. I Nr. 149/1999](#)), which states in its paragraph 1 that “Nuclear weapons must not be manufactured, stored, transported, tested or used in Austria. Facilities for stationing nuclear weapons must not be set up”. Austria therefore has a constitutionally guaranteed nuclear free status but has decided to not seek international recognition of this status, as was done by Mongolia. However, Austria de facto meets the key legal requirements of a NWFZ since 1999. This legal status was further strengthened by Austria’s ratification of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) in 2018.

Austria has consistently spoken out in support of all established NWFZs, co-sponsored or voted for UNGA resolutions dealing with NWFZs. Austria also supports the goal of establishing a WMD Free Zone in the Middle East in line with the decisions taken at the 1995 NPT Review and Extension Conference and has supported the relevant decisions in the NPT and resolutions in the UNGA. Austria offered to host the conference for the establishment of the Zone foreseen by the 2010 NPT Review Conference. Austria also supports the nuclear free Status of Mongolia. In 2015, Austria participated as an observer to the Third Conference of State Parties (CSP) to the Treaties establishing NWFZs, and Mongolia.

Austria shares the view expressed in the resolution that that nuclear-weapon-free zones could be strengthened by a new comprehensive study of the question of nuclear-weapon-free zones in all its aspects and that such a study would be useful in the light of developments in international law related to nuclear-weapon-free zones and the emergence of new nuclear-weapon-free zones in densely populated areas.

Austria has also supported Action 9 of the 2010 NPT Action Plan, which “encouraged states to establish nuclear-weapon-free zones (NWFZs) in regions where no such zone yet exists”. One such region is Europe. Several attempts took place during the Cold War period to discuss the establishment of a NWFZ in Europe but did not get any traction. In furtherance

the implementation of Action 9, Austria and Switzerland commissioned the **Peace Research Institute Frankfurt** with the preparation of a comprehensive scientific study to provide a detailed analysis of the various aspects of a potential NWFZ in Europe. The study „[A Nuclear Weapon-Free Zone in Europe: Concept - Problems - Chances](#)“ was presented at side events in Geneva and Vienna in 2014 and 2015, as well as at the Third Conference of State Parties (CSP) to the Treaties establishing NWFZs, and Mongolia.

As a result of Russia’s illegal invasion of Ukraine, in violation of the political security guarantees given in the Budapest Memorandum and combined with unacceptable nuclear threats, the security situation in Europe has deteriorated dramatically. As a consequence, nuclear risks in Europe have risen and more emphasis is put on nuclear weapons and nuclear deterrence in the European security discourse. A NWFZ in Europe therefore may appear not to be a feasible prospect for the foreseeable future. Nevertheless, it could be beneficial in discussions about a future European security architecture to consider measures that reduce nuclear risks and contribute to confidence-building and nuclear de-escalation and NWFZ-related ideas might be revisited at some stage in the future. The above-mentioned study could be a useful contribution to the comprehensive study mandated by resolution [79/241](#).

Austria had also offered the facilitator of the Conference on the establishment of a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction, Jaako Laajava, to make use of its experience in the nuclear security and safety context, as a country critical of energy generation from nuclear fission with neighbouring countries relying on such power generation. Austria established a system of bilateral nuclear information agreements with its neighbours to build confidence and trust. Similarly, the peaceful uses of nuclear energy in the Middle East – while not directly related - could be used to enhance mutual trust and cooperation through establishing such a system, which could help build confidence and thereby benefit work on the zone.