

**2026 Review Conference of the Parties to the
Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons**

Cluster 1

Statement by the Republic of Austria

delivered by

George-Wilhelm Gallhofer

**Ambassador/Director for Disarmament, Arms Control and Non-Proliferation, Federal
Ministry for European and International Affairs**

Mr. Chair,

Austria aligns with the European Union.

Congratulations on your election. You have our full support.

Our general statement addressed pressing regional issues. Allow me here to focus on the disarmament pillar.

Four years ago, we left our last Review Conference with a sober assessment. The obligations and commitments of the nuclear-weapon States under this Treaty, the 13 Steps, and the 2010 Action Plan remained unfulfilled. They remain unfulfilled today. In January, the Doomsday Clock was set at 85 seconds to midnight: its closest setting ever.

The erosion of norms. The weakening of the nuclear taboo. The modernization and expansion of arsenals. More deployed warheads. A vanishing of transparency and accountability. These trends are deepening mistrust, fuelling proliferation pressures, and pulling us further from a world free of nuclear weapons.

The deterioration is concrete. New START expired in February. For the first time in over fifty years, the two largest arsenals face no binding limits. Senior Russian officials have repeatedly resorted to reckless nuclear rhetoric in the context of Russia's unprovoked war of aggression against Ukraine. This has caused fundamental changes to the security environment in Europe and beyond. But we need to draw the right lessons.

Austria is deeply concerned by the renewed insistence in several regions that nuclear weapons and nuclear deterrence are essential to security. A doctrine that rests on the readiness to inflict catastrophic global harm, including on one's own population, is not sustainable. For three reasons.

First: The more nuclear weapons are claimed essential, the more actors will seek them. This contradicts Article VI. It drives proliferation. No one is safer when more weapons are in more hands.

Second: nuclear deterrence is a high-risk strategy: a system of manufactured and escalating risk. Accidents, miscalculation, technical failure, irrational behaviour, new technologies, disinformation: these are not hypotheticals. They are increasingly probable.

Third: The consequences of nuclear use would not stay within any conflict. People on every continent risk becoming collateral victims. Reliance on these weapons diminishes the security of all humanity.

Mr. Chair,

These are not abstractions. The international conferences hosted by Norway, Mexico and Austria in 2013 and 2014, and the 159-State joint statement delivered by the Austrian Foreign Minister in 2015, established what the science has long shown. We jointly point to this record in working paper 57 and call for substantive engagement with humanitarian and environmental consequences in the NPT.

Mr. Chair,

Having considered these scientifically grounded, legitimate security concerns, the majority of states have chosen to negotiate and join the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. Far from

competing with the NPT, the TPNW gives legal substance to Article VI. We call on all states to join the Treaty. And to those staying away for now: We ask you to engage. To send observers. To encounter the evidence and engage with the legitimate security concerns posed by nuclear weapons.

Mr. Chair,

We are deeply concerned about the erosion of support for another complementary treaty to the NPT: the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty. For the past 30 years the CTBT has been the international community's "north star" to end nuclear testing for all time. Any nuclear test explosion, by any State, at any yield, would gravely damage this Treaty. We call on all States to reaffirm the zero-yield moratorium. And we urge all remaining Annex II states to ratify the Treaty without delay or precondition and to pledge at this RevCon to respect nuclear test taboo without reservation and at any yield. We also appeal to make use of the mechanisms foreseen in the CTBT to clarify whether testing has taken place.

Mr. Chair,

Risks are evolving. Hypersonic systems compress reaction time. Cyber vulnerabilities threaten command-and-control. Artificial intelligence could erode the space for human judgement. In working paper 54 we jointly set out concrete measures to urgently reduce nuclear risks. One principle should not be controversial. The decision to use a nuclear weapons must remain under human control. This was affirmed by last year's first UN General Assembly Resolution on this very question, adopted by 118 States, and some nuclear weapon states have taken first steps in this direction. We should include this in our outcome.

Transparency and accountability is a prerequisite and overdue deliverable. TPNW States have considered this in detail in the framework of the Security Concerns process. At a time when trust between Nuclear Weapons States is missing, this could offer an avenue to foster meaningful engagement. In addition, in working paper 56, we jointly propose several concrete elements for nuclear-weapon States to report on, including on how their planning incorporates the humanitarian consequences of any use beyond the immediately targetted area, as well as compliance with international humanitarian law.

Mr. Chair,

Austria comes to this Review Conference with the urgency that real progress demands. We need to set aside artificial hurdles, such as misinterpretations of undiminished security. Instead, we need a strong signal that the foundational bargain of the NPT, that is of disarmament in good faith by the N5 in exchange of renunciation by the others, is not a lost cause. To restore that trust, we urge the five possessor States to engage without delay: to prevent a renewed arms race, to deliver credible nuclear risk-reduction measures, and to reduce, not increase, their arsenals.

Austria stands ready to support you, Mr. Chair, in making this Review Conference a turning point. And a credible signal to our citizens that we can lower nuclear risks and address the nuclear disorder of our time.

Thank you.