

AUSTRIA

"Country Statement"

Madam and Mr. President,

Mr. Director General,

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

At the outset, I wish to acknowledge with gratitude that the representative of the UN-SG, Ambassador Sergio Duarte, has joined us and I would like to thank him for his inspiring words.

Before turning to the substantive issues of this Conference, I would like to stress that Austria fully associates itself with the statement made by the Presidency of the European Union.

Madam and Mr. President,

As the host country of the Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear Test-Ban Treaty Organization, Austria assumes a special responsibility for the successful preparations for the entry into force of the CTBT. By co-presiding over this Article XIV conference with Costa Rica, Austria gives active proof of this commitment. Since the last Article XIV Conference in New York two years ago significant progress has been achieved. However, new obstacles have emerged, and we need to make it a matter of priority to overcome them.

The issue of proliferation of weapons of mass destruction still dominates the international agenda. At a time when the risk of non-nuclear weapon States or non-State actors acquiring nuclear weapons might have become imminent, non-proliferation and the prevention of developing ever more sophisticated nuclear weapons remains of utmost priority. Minister Plassnik rightly stated in her opening address that "the ratification and support of the CTBT also reflects support of multilateral approaches to non-proliferation and disarmament". On a similar note, UN-SG Ban Ki-Moon recently affirmed: "I see emerging in the world today a zero

tolerance of any further test of nuclear explosive devices. I hope to see the day when this expectation is made legally binding and remain convinced that the CTBT is the way that this goal will be ultimately achieved.”

In this context, I would like to reaffirm the important position of the CTBT within the United Nations’ nuclear non-proliferation regime, especially its close relationship with the NPT and its function as a “double lock”. If any NPT member was ever intending to acquire the capacity to use nuclear materials for other than peaceful purposes, it would find its options severely restricted by the CTBT. The CTBT rules out any nuclear test explosions, and common sense as well as experts’ opinions agree that it is not feasible to put any untested new nuclear weapon into military arsenals. Therefore, the CTBT would efficiently block the military use of any new nuclear device of any Member State.

Madam and Mr. President,

We would like to take this opportunity to commend Palau and the Dominican Republic who were the latest two countries to ratify the CTBT. Although the present number of 140 ratifications of the CTBT is by itself remarkable in the field of disarmament and non-proliferation and should give rise to optimism, it is clear that we have gathered here at this forum to proactively address the slower overall progress in ratifications lately.

On many occasions, States have underlined the great importance they attach to the CTBT and its early entry into force. At the 2000 NPT Review Conference, States made an unequivocal undertaking to the total elimination of their nuclear arsenals and agreed on 13 practical steps to this end. It is worthwhile recalling that the first two steps comprise the “importance and urgency of signatures and ratifications, without delay and without conditions, to achieve the early entry into force of the CTBT” as well as a moratorium on nuclear-weapon-test explosions or any other nuclear explosions. As the NPT Review Conference in 2005 unfortunately failed to produce substantive results in our common field of interest, the above “practical steps” consensually agreed at the 2000 NPT Review Conference remain “State of the Art”.

Madam and Mr. President,

11 years have passed since the CTBT was opened for signature, and it is time for those States which have not yet signed or ratified the Treaty, to do so without conditions and without further delay. It goes without saying the Annex 2 States have to take on a particular responsibility in this regard. Let me conclude by echoing our UN -SG who claimed in July 2007: "I urge those States that have not yet signed to sign and ratify the Treaty as soon as possible, in particular those States whose ratification is essential for the Treaty to enter into force."

Let us work together even harder in order to reach our common goal.