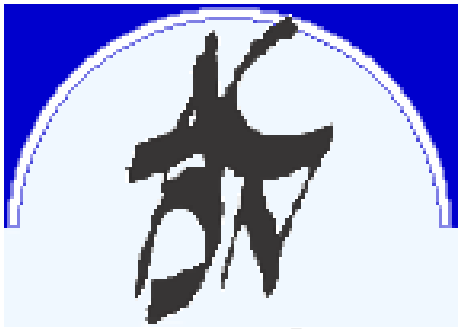
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Proliferation and nuclear disarmament

France should hear the speech of common sense of Austria

- Homepage - News - External sources -

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First Session of the Preparatory Committee
for the 2020 Review Conference of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty
Vienna, May 2-12, 2017
General Debate

Statement by Austria

delivered by Ambassador Franz Josef Kuglitsch
Head of Disarmament Department
May 5, 2017

Mr. President,

Austria aligns itself with the statement delivered earlier on behalf of the European Union. Let me add some remarks from the national perspective.

For Austria, non-proliferation and nuclear disarmament have always been communicating vessels in the context of the NPT. Therefore, we have to make credible progress on multilateral disarmament, not only for its own sake but also to ensure and sustain non-proliferation. This basic premise has been put into question in the last 20 years despite the welcome reduction of nuclear stockpiles of the USA and the Russian Federation. The NPT is under considerable stress, but certainly not because of the over-emphasis on disarmament as one delegation asserted during the general debate, on the contrary!

The implementation of the 13 Steps on nuclear disarmament agreed in 2000, as well as the implementation of the 64 point Action Plan agreed in 2010 remains largely unfulfilled. Worse, it seems that we are walking back on these commitments. This trend is worrying. Instead of diminishing the role and significance of nuclear weapons in military concepts and doctrines, we observe a renewed emphasis on even more sophisticated forms of this weapon of mass destruction.

The humanitarian initiative has delivered powerful new arguments about the catastrophic consequences of the use of nuclear weapons. It states that there can be no 100 per cent guarantee that nuclear deterrence will work in all cases. In our view, there is not a lower degree of danger for people living in nuclear armed State. On the contrary, they live under a heightened danger of a possible use of nuclear weapon against their country.

What we want to achieve through the humanitarian approach is **more security for all!**

Everybody seems to agree that a nuclear weapon free world is a goal we all should strive for. However, we are hearing the argument that nuclear weapons are indispensable for security reasons and nuclear disarmament has to take into account the overall security situation. Let's not be mistaken: The forceful proclamation of alleged security benefits of nuclear weapons is a powerful proliferator as more and more States will wish to get a hold of this weapon which has the additional benefit of being associated with prestige and power. As a side remark, I would just like to note that Article VI of the NPT does not tie the obligation for nuclear disarmament negotiations "in good faith" to any conditions whatsoever.

Mr. President,

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Building on these more general considerations, let me briefly react to some comments expressed by delegations on the issue of the negotiations on a treaty prohibiting nuclear weapon. No one can and no one wants to impose nuclear disarmament on the nuclear weapon States against their will.

To be more specific, the Prohibition Treaty will:

- **challenge the deep rooted view** that nuclear weapons contribute to international stability;
- **strengthen the legal and political norms** against the use of nuclear weapons and bring more security for all states, since all would suffer from the consequences of a nuclear war;
- be **a response to new challenges, like cyberattacks or terrorists** trying to acquire nuclear material or the toxic cocktail of growing nuclear stockpiles in regional arenas. Nuclear weapons are useless to combat new threats, like ISIS.

Furthermore, the Prohibition Treaty will

- **be a realistic undertaking:** experience from biological and chemical weapons shows that weapons of mass destruction can be prohibited first and then eliminated. In the nuclear sphere, the JCPOA with Iran is an example that patience and endurance can achieve results.
- **be useful, even if the Nuclear Weapon States do not join the negotiations** in a first phase. They are invited to participate and will have the possibility to join later if they so wish.
- **be a trigger for the elaboration of additional measures,** e.g. on nuclear disarmament verification and an FMCT, thus paving the way for the subsequent participation of NW States in the process. This trigger effect is not a shortcut.
- **strengthen an increasingly frail NPT** by contributing to its implementation, in particular of its Art. VI

On the other hand, the Prohibition Treaty will NOT:

- **undermine strategic or regional stability**: On the contrary, it will enhance security, as it will diminish the overall role of nuclear weapons at all levels, strategic and regional;
- **be directed against any particular State or alliance**, nor attempt to undermine the security of a particular state or region;
- **create a parallel instrument to the NPT or the CTBT**: Both will remain fully valid.
- **weaken the NPT**: The NPT came under strain because of the actions of North Korea, the inability of the nuclear armed states to make progress on disarmament, and the inability to make progress on a WMD free zone in the Middle East.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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