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Statement by
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Austria

Conference on Facilitating the Entry into Force of the
Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty

New York, 22 September 2005

Mr. President,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Allow me at the outset to congratulate you, Mr. President, on your election to this post and thank you and your team for the intensive efforts in preparing this conference. I should also like to acknowledge with gratitude that the UN-SG has personally opened our gathering yesterday and I thank him for highlighting the importance of our endeavour in the international disarmament and non-proliferation context.

I should also like to stress that Austria fully associates herself with the statement delivered by the Presidency of the European Union.

Mr. President,

As the host country for the Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organisation, Austria assumes a special responsibility for the successful preparations for entry into force of the CTBT. Since the last Article XIV Conference, which took place in Vienna two years ago, much progress has been achieved, yet new obstacles have emerged:

At a time when the risk of non-nuclear weapon States or non state actors acquiring nuclear weapons might have become imminent, non-proliferation as well as the prevention of developing ever more sophisticated nuclear weapons remains of utmost priority.

How does the CTBT contribute to this goal? At the 2000 NPT Review Conference, the Nuclear Weapons States made an unequivocal undertaking to the total elimination of their nuclear arsenals and agreed to 13 practical steps to this end. The first two steps point to 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 as well as the UN Summit last week unfortunately failed to produce substantive documents in our common field of interest, the above "practical steps" consensually agreed at the 2000 NPT Review Conference remain "state of the Art".

Mr. President,

Although the present number of 125 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 in this forum to proactively address the slower progress in ratifications lately. We should do so by renewed impetus and fresh ideas.

Thus, looking pragmatically at the issues in regional contexts, I believe that supplementary options for States to contribute to the Entry into force of the Treaty in a coordinated manner are worth being explored. Such initiatives might also build confidence among geographical regions and thus further contribute to the well functioning of the Organisation.

Renewed emphasis should also be put on the additional benefits of civil and scientific applications of the verification technologies in manifold areas including disaster mitigation. Simply, it would not be understood by the public at large —in case the ongoing technical tests

prove successful- that data readily available would not be made available instead of contributing to the physical security of people e.g. in coastal areas, on airplanes, etc. I therefore welcome the seminar on this topic tomorrow afternoon which should enlighten us further.

Mr. President,

The Provisional Technical Secretariat on its side has been progressing well in setting up the International Verification Regime. In this context, let me pay tribute to the success of former Executive Secretary Wolfgang Hoffmann and his team.

The new Executive Secretary Tibor Toth whom I warmly welcome in his function has taken over at an important junction for the Organisation, as the focus will progressively be shifting from the build up of stations to the operational phase. Capacity building e.g. by Training of national operators plays an essential role in this transition and I am glad that Austria was able to contribute repeatedly to this end by organising workshops, by building up capacities in neighbouring "National Data Centres", etc.

Be assured, Mr. Executive Secretary, of Austria's continued support in the matter.

Mr. President,

Nine years after opening the CTBT for signature, it is time for those states which have not yet signed or ratified the Treaty to do so without conditions and without further delay. Let us work together to achieve this common objective.

By doing so, it is my sincere hope that the next CTBT-Conference in Vienna be convened under Article II instead of under Article XIV of the Treaty: If we continue to join forces, we will succeed to bring this landmark treaty into force.

I thank you for your attention.