

AUSTRIA



PERMANENT MISSION OF AUSTRIA
TO THE UNITED NATIONS

Statement

by

**Ambassador Christian Strohal
Permanent Representative of Austria**

to the United Nations in Geneva

at the

General Debate of the First Committee

New York, 10 October 2012

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Mr. President,

Austria aligns itself with the General Statement of the European Union that was delivered on Monday. I would like to use the opportunity today to briefly highlight two specific issues to which Austria attaches particular importance at this year's session of the First Committee.

The first issue is the need for substantive progress in multilateral nuclear disarmament and towards the achievement and maintenance of a world without nuclear weapons. This is an aspiration shared by all humankind and it is also a commitment that the entire international community has undertaken. It needs to be acted on with urgency.

For Austria, functioning multilateral security institutions are a vital component of our security and we pay tribute to the role of the UN disarmament framework in this regard. At the same time, it is deeply disconcerting that we have not been able for several years to use this framework effectively to advance with nuclear disarmament. What we have seen instead are flawed multilateral processes that are dominated by tactics to maintain the status quo for as long as possible. The consequence of all this is an increasing erosion of legitimacy of existing legal frameworks and institutions.

This concern and frustration are widely shared. Many delegations have spent considerable efforts to try to find ways of overcoming the paralysis in multilateral disarmament fora. Yet, these efforts have thus far been unsuccessful due to the strong presence of vested interests and misuse of procedural rules that have been impossible to overcome. We are convinced, however, that the urgency of the issue gives a responsibility to all of us to try new and innovative approaches. For this reason, Austria has decided to again work with like-minded states on a draft resolution that aims at bringing back the dynamics to multilateral nuclear disarmament.

The purpose of the initiative is to facilitate substantive multilateral progress in the area of nuclear disarmament through the establishment of an Open-Ended Working Group that would convene in Geneva for up to three weeks during next year. It would be tasked to develop concrete proposals to take forward multilateral negotiations for the achievement and maintenance of a world without nuclear weapons. It is intended to provide a forum for constructive substantive work without prejudice to any outcome.

We hope this resolution initiative will be perceived as an opportunity for the UN disarmament community to overcome the prevailing inertia and move towards substantive disarmament negotiations. We look forward to the consultations with interested states in the coming weeks.

Mr. President,

The second aspect that I would like to touch upon today is the Hague Code of Conduct against ballistic missile proliferation. This year marks the tenth anniversary since its adoption in The Hague in 2002. Austria has served as the Immediate Central Contact and Executive Secretariat of the Code since its inception. In this function, Austria would like to express satisfaction that the HCoC has served as a unique multilateral confidence building and transparency instrument in the field of ballistic missile systems. We welcome the progress to date in the universalisation and implementation of the Code. The First Committee is called upon to adopt the biannual HCOC resolution, the draft of which was agreed upon at the HCOC regular meeting in Vienna. Austria is one of the co-sponsors of the resolution and encourages all UN Member States to support the resolution. Austria would also like to encourage further engagement by UN Member States in dealing with the issue of missile proliferation in the future.

Thank you.