

SC - High-Level Summit on Nuclear Nonproliferation and Nuclear Disarmament -
President Heinz Fischer

Statement by H.E. Mr. Heinz Fischer - Federal President of the Republic of Austria

New York, 24 September 2009

Mr. President,
Mr. Secretary-General,
Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

This is an auspicious moment: Today the Security Council of the UN pronounces its commitment to a world without nuclear weapons.

For more than half a century, this goal has been pursued by concerned citizens and political leaders around the world. The international community has undertaken efforts to contain the threat but many have adjusted to it, almost accepting the nuclear shadow as part of life.

But any such complacency is ill-founded:

We have arrived at a fork in the road: We can maintain our course and hope nothing happens. Or we can seek real change.

Future historians will assess whether today is a turning point. This will not depend on the words spoken today but on the deeds that follow. In May 2010 the international community will convene at the NPT-Review Conference in New York. There, we will have to agree on measures that enable progress toward a nuclear weapon free world.

For Austria, the following points will be paramount:

1. The prospect of a world without nuclear weapons must become a goal shared by all States. Austria supports the idea of a Nuclear Weapons Convention equipped with a sophisticated verification mechanism. In the meantime, the NPT remains the core of the global nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation regime. But to fulfil its functions effectively, it must be strengthened, it must be institutionalized, and it must become universal.
2. The Nuclear-Weapons-States must reduce their arsenals. As you, Mr. President, noted in Prague, "Words must mean something". The words enshrined in Article VI of the NPT have to be taken seriously. There have been positive developments, yes, but Nuclear-Weapons-States must do more.
3. We must devise a process for entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear Test-Ban

Treaty (CTBT). Austria and Costa Rica, as co-chairs of the Article XIV-Conference, worked hard to promote entry into force over the last two years. This will only be possible, however, with the political commitment of the 9 States that still need to ratify.

4. We must enable the Conference on Disarmament (CD) in Geneva to negotiate a Fissile Material Cut-Off-Treaty (FMCT). As current President of the Conference, Austria will make every effort to promote this goal. But to achieve progress the support of all its members is necessary.

5. Our capabilities to prevent nuclear materials from proliferating to States and non-state actors must improve. Security Council Resolution 1540 needs better implementation: Austria welcomes its comprehensive review next week. Most importantly, we must enhance the International Atomic Energy Agency's (IAEA) monitoring and verification capabilities and ensure strict export control for sensitive material and technologies. In view of the presence of Director General ElBaradei here today, let me thank him warmly for his excellent work as head of the Agency over the last 12 years.

6. Finally, we must strengthen trust and confidence. Nuclear weapon free zones contribute significantly to sustainable stability; regions like the Middle East would benefit from such a regime. Ensuring that arms control mechanisms operate in a fair and transparent manner is crucial. Austria's proposal to multilateralize the nuclear fuel cycle under the control of the IAEA could help to avoid crises of trust such as those with regard to the Iranian and North Korean nuclear programs.

For clarification, I would like to underline that paragraph 11 of this Resolution refers to those countries that have decided to use nuclear energy for peaceful energy reasons, which is not the case for Austria.

Mr President,

Austria is very satisfied that the Resolution we just adopted is a strong text, a positive contribution to the ongoing disarmament process. But resolutions are not enough. Every State must accept responsibility and actively participate.

I promise: Austria's support will be there. You can also count on the European Union with its well-known position on these issues and its deep commitment to strengthening the multilateral system. And we can rely on civil society which throughout the years remained the motor behind disarmament efforts.

Mr President,

Today we identified our goals for the future. We now need the energy, the commitment and the persistence to move forward. The support by Heads of State and Government at this table today makes me confident that, together, we can reach our goal.

Thank you.