

**Statement of Secretary General
for European and International Affairs of Austria
H.E. Johannes Kyrle**

First Session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2015 Review Conference
of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty
30 April 2012

Mr. Chairman,
distinguished delegates,

1) At the outset, I would like to congratulate you, Ambassador Woolcott on your election as chair of this conference. You can count on the full support of the Austrian delegation.

2) Let me also say how satisfied we are that the new NPT review cycle starts in Vienna. The NPT pillars are represented prominently in Vienna, through the presence of the International Atomic Energy Agency and of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization. The focus of Vienna-based delegations on nuclear issues today is also higher than ever before. It is logical that the NPT has a stop in Vienna to profit from the expertise assembled here. We can now also draw on services and input from the newly established Vienna office of the UN-Office of Disarmament Affairs (UNODA) as well as the Vienna Centre for Disarmament and Non-proliferation (VCDNP) that I had announced as Austrian initiatives two years ago. Both offices have started operating with substantial Austrian support and are providing important contributions to our work.

Mr. Chairman,

3) We are starting this review cycle with some wind in our sails coming from the successful Review Conference in 2010. The fact that the entire NPT membership was able to agree on a forward-

looking Action Plan is no small accomplishment – a sign that the NPT is still the cornerstone of the international nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation regime. Nevertheless, we need to recognize that this regime continues to face serious challenges that need to be addressed with urgency.

4) Let me highlight what these key challenges for the NPT are in our view:

- i. The confidence in the NPT and the wider regime as a credible means to prevent the proliferation of nuclear weapons must be strengthened.

The NPT has served us well in the past 40 years. The number of states possessing nuclear weapons has not spiralled out of control as feared in the 1960s. However, India, Israel and Pakistan, have remained outside of the NPT. North Korea abused its NPT membership to develop a nuclear weapons program and there have been several clandestine nuclear weapons programs in other countries.

Today, the most challenging issue related to the non-proliferation credibility of the NPT, however, relates to the Iranian nuclear program and the concerns of the international community as to its nature. Finding a peaceful and diplomatic solution for this issue is of paramount importance. I would like to appeal to Iran to use the promising recent restart of E3/EU + 3 talks to do its utmost to address the concerns of the international community about the nature of its nuclear program. While Iran's rights under the NPT are undisputed, all open questions need to be solved in a transparent manner and in full cooperation with the IAEA. All NPT member states have a vested interest that this issue is resolved in a way that strengthens the nuclear disarmament and non-

proliferation regime. In this context, I would like to recall that Austria has always advocated the universal application of the best current verification standards. This would help us avoid future proliferation concerns.

ii. The second key challenge for the NPT concerns nuclear disarmament:

In our view, this review cycle will determine whether the NPT is a credible framework for nuclear disarmament. The forward looking action plan would, if implemented, put us on a right track towards a world without nuclear weapons. Policies by all NPT states need to be fully compatible with this objective. This must include taking steps to diminish the role and significance of nuclear weapons in all military and security concepts, doctrines and policies. Important transparency commitments by nuclear weapons states need to be fulfilled. The CTBT needs to be brought into force or at least significantly closer to this goal. Further progress on bilateral US-Russia negotiations is expected. Multilateral disarmament negotiations need to be initiated, such as on an FMCT, and serious multilateral processes need to be started on other important nuclear disarmament issues.

The integrity of the NPT hinges on a credible – I underline credible – process towards implementation. Many NPT states remember the 13 steps that were agreed in 2000 and soon forgotten. Words must be matched with and action. I am hopeful that we will see such action.

Nuclear weapon states have the prime responsibility for nuclear disarmament, but Article 6 is in the interest of - and also an obligation of - all States party to the NPT. The action plan reflects this by listing many actions that can and should be undertaken by

all. Austria will contribute to these follow-on actions. We will report on as many actions as possible and encourage all states to do the same. Let us use this action plan as a tool for implementation and a focussed debate and assess where we stand in 2015.

iii. The 3rd key challenge for the NPT concerns the Middle East as a Zone free of weapons of mass destruction and their delivery systems.

The decision for a conference in 2012 was the first important step. The designation of Finland as host and of Under Secretary of State Laajeva as facilitator for this process was the second. I am impressed by the energy, commitment and optimism with which the Finnish team addresses their very challenging mandate. The states of the region now need to take the third step and use the services offered by Finland to the fullest. Now they are offered a framework to start a process that could help them fulfil their dreams for peace, disarmament and cooperation in the region. It is up to them to seize this opportunity. It is in the interest of us all that this process is credible and successful. Austria – and I am sure all other States – will also offer support whenever possible.

Mr. Chairman,

5) The European Union is contributing to the conference with statements and working papers, which Austria fully endorses. However, the special Austrian position as regards nuclear energy is well known. We consider the generation of electricity through nuclear fission neither sustainable nor safe, and not a viable avenue in the combat of climate change. Austria has therefore renounced the use of nuclear power in its national energy mix. All the same, Austria fully respects the rights of all states to peaceful uses of nuclear energy as enshrined in the NPT. These rights, however,

bring with them certain responsibilities and obligations. The accident at the Fukushima nuclear power plant has reminded us all not to be complacent, but to universally apply the strictest possible standards of nuclear safety and security.

Mr. Chairman,

6) Anything produced by humans is fallible. Fukushima is a case in point for Murphy's Law. Eventually something that *can* go wrong also *goes* wrong. This principle applies to nuclear weapons too. Humanity has been very lucky to get through the bipolar Cold War without nuclear weapons being used. With potentially ever rising numbers of nuclear armed states, the odds are not very encouraging.

7) The logic of nuclear disarmament will ultimately prevail. The question is whether it will happen through a rational, serious political effort by the international community or as a result of a cataclysmic event. How we deal with nuclear weapons is a litmus-test for the international community. It will clarify whether we are capable to resolve a fundamental challenge to our very existence through international cooperation.

8) This is what is at stake in the NPT. It requires the urgent cooperation of all States. We face serious challenges, but this is also a time of opportunity. I am convinced that the challenges can be met if the "silent majority" of States committed to multilateralism makes itself heard. We must move beyond the divisions and entrenched positions that have made substantive multilateral progress on disarmament and non-proliferation issues difficult. We need to change the discourse on nuclear weapons from a narrow security perspective and work together with civil society - and for our societies. A world free of nuclear weapons is a

shared goal of all of humanity. We must achieve this goal not just for ourselves, but also for the younger generations. They are watching us, they depend on us. We have to give them hope for peace and a sustainable future.

Mr. Chairman, distinguished delegates,

In this spirit, I would like to welcome you all here in Vienna and wish us all a productive and successful conference.

Thank you