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**Statement**

**by**

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of the Republic of Austria**

**at**

**the 64<sup>th</sup> Session of the  
United Nations General Assembly**

**New York, 26 September 2009**

Mr. President, distinguished delegates,

This has been a truly remarkable week. The leadership shown by the Secretary General on climate change, the new policies of President Obama, which he so eloquently set out before us, the constructive responses to these initiatives from many parts of the world and the historic meeting of the UN Security Council which committed itself to a world without nuclear weapons. We all have witnessed something new and different: a genuine opportunity for a real renaissance of multilateralism. There is a real chance to turn the United Nations once again into what was originally envisaged in the Charter: not just a forum of discussion but a place for action, the central focal point of the efforts of the international community to find common solutions to common challenges.

It will depend on each and every member of this organisation to make sure that this historic opportunity is seized. Cooperation is not a mere option; it is an indispensable necessity, if we want to succeed.

Together we have to build a world based on predictable and equitable rules, applicable to every member, big or small, strong or weak. Adherence to the Rule of Law and the principles of the UN Charter is critical to conflict prevention, stability and sustainable long term development.

A year ago UN member states entrusted my country with a seat in the Security Council for the years 2009-2010. We take this responsibility very seriously.

One important focus of our work in the Council is to improve the protection of civilians in armed conflict. Despite significant progress, armed conflicts continue to darken the lives of men, women and children in many parts of the world.

Austria has been working actively with others on the expansion of the monitoring and reporting of serious child rights violations. Austria fully supports Security Council resolution 1820 and the follow-up resolution to be adopted next week as a decisive response of the international community to sexual violence in conflict situations. At the same time, Austria attaches great importance to the participation of women in the promotion of peace and security: Women must have a voice in every peace process throughout the world.

But many challenges remain: How can we improve the protection of civilians on the ground, in particular in situations where the Council has provided peacekeeping operations with a clear protection mandate? How can we ensure better compliance by parties to conflict with their obligations under international humanitarian law, for instance to allow full access for humanitarian assistance?

We will therefore use our Security Council Presidency in November to identify concrete measures to improve the protection of civilians. In order to do so, I invite all partners to join me in an open debate on 13 November and am pleased that the Secretary-General has agreed to participate.

Mr. President, distinguished delegates,

In recent years, several peacekeeping missions – such as the UN Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo – have been mandated by the Council to ensure the physical protection of the civilian population. Its role to provide protection to refugees and internally displaced persons was a strong factor in Austria's decision to contribute troops to the EU and UN missions in Chad and the Central African Republic. Austria has also contributed to the UN Study to analyse the experiences in the implementation of such protection mandates in peace operations. We thus hope to contribute to the overall reform efforts of UN peacekeeping. Our aim must be to have more effective and better resourced peacekeeping missions which are in a position to implement their mandates in a credible and consistent manner.

To achieve sustainable peace, security and development, peacekeeping must be complemented by rebuilding functioning institutions, particularly in the judiciary and the security sector. In this context we commend the efforts of UNODC in combating corruption, organised crime and drug trafficking.

The Peacebuilding Commission is a new form of partnership between countries emerging from conflict, donors and main providers of personnel in UN missions to ensure that support is tailored to specific local needs. Austria is committed to the work of the Peacebuilding Commission and has recently joined the country specific configuration for Sierra Leone – a model case for successful peace building.

Sustainable peace can only be achieved when a society also addresses its past. The establishment of effective justice and reconciliation mechanisms at national level is crucial to end impunity and to ensure the rights of victims. Such efforts can be complemented by international criminal justice mechanisms, such as the ad hoc tribunals and the International Criminal Court.

Peace, security and stability are preconditions for sustainable development. Eradicating extreme poverty and hunger still continues to be one of the main challenges of the international community. Achieving the Millennium Development Goals by 2015 is far from assured. In view of the global financial crisis, increased efforts by the international community are urgently needed. Austria will contribute its share to this global endeavour.

All these efforts will be in vain if we are unable to protect our planet. Climate change is a fundamental threat to humankind – aggravating poverty, hunger, environmental degradation and insecurity, and thus seriously threatening the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.

The UN Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen in December must decide on concrete actions to curb climate change based on mutual trust and strong international cooperation.

Climate and energy measures can also be an important part of our response to the current economic crisis. Investments in green technologies and sustainable, affordable and stable energy supplies will benefit both the economy and the climate.

Mr. President, distinguished delegates,

The Security Council summit on nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament earlier this week issued a strong call for a world free of nuclear weapons.

For this vision to become reality, we need progress on several fronts:

1. Austria, as chairman of the CTBT Conference together with Costa Rica in the last two years, is proud to have contributed to bringing the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty closer to entry into force.

2. As current chair of the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva, Austria works hard to translate the recent positive momentum into substantial progress especially on a verifiable Fissile Material Cut-Off Treaty.

3. The Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty must be reinforced. The Review Conference next year will have to agree on a package of measures and procedures that address the key issues but most of all it will need to build trust and confidence.

Let me continue with three short remarks on conventional disarmament:

1. First, I appeal to all States to make the Mine Ban Conference in Colombia in December a success and in particular to ensure improved victims' assistance.

2. Second, I welcome the growing support for the Convention on Cluster Munitions. Austria ratified the Convention in April this year. We appeal to all states to sign and ratify as soon as possible.

3. Third, we have to counter the illegal proliferation of small arms and light weapons. An Arms Trade Treaty would be an important step in this regard. To contribute to speedy negotiations, Austria will host an international conference in Vienna in February next year.

Mr. President, distinguished delegates,

With regard to the Iranian nuclear programme it is indispensable that Iran fully complies with all relevant Security Council resolutions and closely cooperates with the IAEA. The most recent announcement by the government of Iran concerning an additional enrichment facility is discouraging and further increases our concern.

As an important regional actor Iran has the responsibility to contribute to peace and security in the area. The time has now come for Iran to finally enter into a constructive dialogue with the international community. Iran should therefore grasp the extended hand of its international partners and engage in genuine and serious negotiations. The debates during this week have clearly shown that the world will not accept an Iran armed with nuclear weapons.

Let me also underline that Austria firmly rejects the unacceptable remarks by President Ahmadinejad during his speech on Wednesday. We reject any abuse of the UN General Assembly as a platform for intolerance, anti-Semitism, and racial hatred.

Regarding the Middle East we saw this week's summit between President Obama, PM Netanyahu and President Abbas as a sign of hope. We appeal to the parties to remove the remaining obstacles to the early resumption of negotiations.

After decades of hostility and violence time has come to move decisively forward. Israel's right to exist in security and peace and the realization of the rights of the Palestinian people to their own state are not contradictions. On the contrary they are both crucial elements of a comprehensive and just solution.

Austria will continue to help establishing the economic foundation and the institutional infrastructure of a future Palestinian state. It will also within the framework of the European Union contribute to the efforts for promoting a dynamic and result oriented peace process.

International cooperation and dialogue are the basis for sustainable peace and development. Only by working together closely will we be able to successfully address the many challenges of today's globalized world. We therefore appreciate your initiative, Mr. President, to make the need for dialogue a main theme of this week's debate.

Situated in the heart of Europe and for most of its history at the crossroads of different cultures, religions and political systems, Austria has developed a practice of constructive dialogue, hosting one of the seats of the United Nations for three decades.

I have made it one of my foreign policy priorities to position Austria even stronger as a platform for peace and dialogue. We stand ready to host international negotiations and provide our services like most recently the informal talks on Western Sahara.

You can count on Austria to be a partner in translating the words, ideas and initiatives of this week into concrete action.