Mr. Chairman,

On cluster two, Austria aligns herself with the statement of the European Union. From the national point of view, I would like to make the following additional remarks.

Non-proliferation of nuclear weapons figures prominently in the current programme of work of the Austrian government. We see the prevention of the further spread of nuclear weapons not only as an obligation under the NPT, but also as a national foreign policy priority. In line with this approach, we have an additional protocol with the IAEA in place. Austria takes its export control commitments very seriously also with regard to ballistic missiles. We provide the secretariat for the Hague Code of Conduct against the proliferation of ballistic missiles. A couple of years ago, Austria contributed significantly to bringing about the Amendment to the Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Material. We are careful to implement faithfully UNSC Resolution 1540 aiming at denying non-State actors access to nuclear or other weapons of mass destruction. We believe that the NPT States Parties should jointly call on all States to accede to relevant legal instruments, or align their policies with them, as the case may be.

Mr. Chairman,

The Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) agreed in Vienna in 2015 has been the most significant success in nuclear non-proliferation in recent years. Continued full implementation by all States concerned is essential and will facilitate addressing further issues of concern not object to the agreement proper. Furthermore, the JCPOA is significant not only as a solution to a specific country situation. More broadly, the agreement exemplifies that the approach of effective multilateralism with dialogue and negotiations at its centre actually brings results. Following through on the JCPOA therefore will enhance our chances to resolve other proliferation challenges, while abandoning it would diminish our ability to achieve results on those other fronts. The
issues that come to mind are the establishment of a weapons of mass destruction free zone in the Middle East which my country supports, and in particular the termination of the nuclear and ballistic missile programme of the DPRK. On this latter issue, we welcome recent positive developments and announcements, bearing in mind that of course, as is also the case with the WMDFZME, real tangible progress has yet to be achieved.

Mr. Chairman,

Austria supports the rigorous implementation and continuous improvement of the international non-proliferation framework. This is essential to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons to additional States or possibly other actors. It is very difficult to prevent a country from acquiring the bomb if there is a real determination. So suppression of supply is not enough, we have to look at the root causes why a country might seek nuclear weapons. There is a belief, misguided in Austria’s view, that the possession of nuclear weapons enhances national security. It is unfortunate that nuclear weapon States continue to profess this view themselves and thereby contribute to making nuclear weapons appear attractive to others. This is one of the reasons why NPT States Parties should engage in a discussion about the security implications of nuclear weapons which would take due account of the fact that nuclear weapons represent a grave threat to security, including for the nuclear weapons possessors themselves. Let me draw delegates’ attention to a working paper Austria has submitted to this Conference intended to stimulate this discussion.

Mr. Chairman,

To conclude, Austria believes that the international non-proliferation efforts with the NPT at the centre have to be further strengthened. Restraining action continues to be necessary. But its effectiveness remains limited unless we fundamentally change our collective attitude to nuclear weapons. A majority of States today has already achieved this shift in consciousness. They are immune to proliferation because they have understood that they will always be better off in terms of their security without nuclear weapons no matter in whose hands. To further disseminate this view is the single most effective contribution to non-proliferation.

I thank you.