2015 Review Conference of the Parties to the
Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons
Statement for Main Committee I
Delegation of Austria
07 May 2015

Mr. Chairman,

The nuclear disarmament obligations and commitments under the NPT, including the outcomes of past NPT Review Conferences in this area, are a further development and operationalization of the Article VI treaty obligation.

In 2010, nuclear weapon states were called upon to accelerate concrete progress leading to nuclear disarmament and their prompt engagement on specific actions in this regard as well as the implementation of the Start Treaty. We acknowledge the steps taken by individual nuclear weapon states, however it should be of greatest concern to the Conference that the reporting of the nuclear weapon states in accordance with Action 5 demonstrates their continued reliance on nuclear weapons, with little or no changes in policy. The ongoing modernization of nuclear arsenals by the nuclear weapon states cannot be seen as compatible with the spirit and the letter of this Treaty. While the reporting by nuclear weapon states does unfortunately not provide information on the resources that go into the maintenance and modernization of nuclear weapon systems, however, as we speak about nuclear disarmament in this room, we are receiving news reports about modernization plans and programs at the scale of billions of dollars. Reliance on nuclear weapons increases the risk of proliferation, in fact incites proliferation and increases the risk of the use of nuclear weapons, be it accidentally or intentionally. There has been little sign of prompt or accelerated progress on the actions called for by Action 5. The Review Conference should call on all States to refrain from any actions that are contrary to the spirit and purpose of the Treaty or the obligations and commitments from the previous Review Conferences, in particular in light of the disarmament obligations and commitments.

Overall, we must conclude that we cannot see sufficiently credible progress on the actions that only nuclear weapon states can fulfill, clearly affirming their determination to implement the obligations and commitments under the Treaty. In Austria's view, there is a clear contradiction in the continued reliance on nuclear
weapons, modernization and long-term investments on the one hand and declaring support for nuclear disarmament and a world without nuclear weapons on the other hand. We see a fundamental credibility deficit which we cannot ignore if we wish this treaty to remain credible for both – nuclear disarmament and nonproliferation. And because there is a credibility gap with regard to the implementation of Art. VI, there is a need to fill the legal gap for the elimination and prohibition of nuclear weapons.

There is no doubt that the implementation of our Treaty obligation for achieving and maintaining a nuclear weapon free world is a shared responsibility of all states parties. In line with Action 1, states parties have during the past years increased their understanding of the unacceptable humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapon detonations that would have trans-boundary effects that could not be responded to in any adequate way and the unacceptable risks associated with the existence of these weapons. It is this knowledge that has increased the sense of urgency among non-nuclear weapon states, as evidenced by the support of 159 States for the joint statement. Credible and measurable benchmarks should be established at this Conference in order to monitor and assess the future implementation of the Treaty obligations and commitments concerning nuclear disarmament, including through reporting. Most importantly, in line with Article VI, effective measures must be put in place at a multilateral level in order to fulfill this Treaty obligation. The legal gap for the prohibition and elimination of nuclear weapons must be filled, as more than 80 states parties are calling for in support of the pledge presented by Austria at the Vienna Conference. We remain open regarding the process in which this is to be achieved; what is required is credible progress and a determination and urgency to achieve results.

The UN and international organizations, the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, elected representatives and civil society have been playing a crucial role throughout this cycle for advancing the goals of the Treaty, and in particular in the area of nuclear disarmament. We wish to see their role adequately reflected in the outcome of this Conference. We have during this Conference at numerous occasions reiterated the importance of disarmament and non-proliferation education. I would at this stage only recall the recommendation that disarmament education should be well placed in education curricula for the benefit of future generations, but also that world leaders as well as disarmament delegates should visit Hiroshima, Nagasaki as well as locations where nuclear testing took place and engage directly with testimonies.

I thank you.