

Mr President,

It is moving to be here today, so close to the site of the great tragedy. The people here and all over Japan have faced up and dealt with so bravely. We are reminded by this that, we have to place potential victims of a nuclear accident in the very centre of all our considerations.

Both Fukushima and Chernobyl have shown that the victims cannot by any means rely on a nuclear liability regime. That would not be sufficient to compensate them fully for their losses. With that in mind, we must strive to do more and better to protect our people along the lines of the polluter-pays-principle.

Mr President

This important meeting along with last year's ministerial conference of the IAEA in Vienna constitutes the inception of a process that must imperatively lead to greater nuclear safety and security all over the world.

As a country that does not use nuclear energy production Austria is just as committed to this process as anybody else, because the dangers involved have no borders.

Indeed, my government is proud to have initiated a comprehensive safety and security assessment of all nuclear power plants in the European Union – the so called *Stress Tests*; this has been a unique exercise, both in scope as well as in depth. It was a breakthrough for

international cooperation and transparency and it went even beyond the European Union, as Switzerland and Ukraine have participated as well.

The vast body of findings and recommendations resulting from this endeavour will now be translated into national action plans.

The European Council has also called for the rapid implementation of the recommendations from the Ad Hoc Group on Nuclear Security set up by member states in parallel to the *Stress Tests* to deal with security aspects - that is the protection of nuclear installations from malicious acts like terrorism in its various forms but also airplane crashes and other non-natural disasters.

Mr President

Ever since the accident in Fukushima and even more so since the Vienna conference, the discussion is centred on one concept: the so called "Lessons Learned". These are, in my opinion of a more fundamental nature than belatedly realizing the vulnerability of nuclear installations in the face of natural disasters and to put some extra steel and concrete into some of them will not suffice. We will have to face up to the inevitability of further incidents and strive to mitigate their consequences as well as establishing clear responsibilities including liabilities.

But beyond the robustness of existing and future installations we must also dare to ask more radical questions on a more strategic level:

Do we really think that nuclear energy is sustainable in the long term? Can we vouch for its safety and security over extended, indeed, practically unlimited periods of time?

A nuclear facility which goes into operation today will have to run for sixty years in order to return the enormous investment made, yet the waste it generates remains dangerous for millennia.

Mr President

The Austrian decision taken in 1978 not to use nuclear power was rational and it was based upon a country-wide involvement of our most important stakeholders: the Austrian citizens. It has developed over the years into a national consensus.

Thus, while respecting the sovereign right of each state to decide its national energy mix, Austria feels entitled and obliged to raise its voice where legitimate needs for protection of Austrian citizens and the environment are concerned. This means that Austria will use all legal means to defend her safety interests in all cases where nuclear installations will or are likely to have a negative impact on the Austrian population, environment, and infrastructure.

I invite all states represented here who consider developing a nuclear power program to base their final decision on a wide and intensive opinion building process. It is imperative to take into account all risks and respective international responsibilities.

I also commend those governments who have firmly taken or at least seriously envisaged a decision to phase out nuclear energy in the foreseeable future – this includes, of course, the government of Japan.

With the Fukushima disaster, last year, Japan has lived up to enormous courage and determination that the whole world has admired in your people.

Thank you very much!