

Statement by H.E. Dr. Michael Spindelegger

Vice-Chancellor and Federal Minister for European and International Affairs of the Republic of Austria

Director General,

Mr President - Honorable Minister Martonyi,

Excellencies,

ladies and gentlemen,

as the representative of the host country of the International Atomic Energy Agency, I would like to start my statement with a hearty welcome to all participants of this international conference on nuclear security. This conference is a regular feature of the Agency's meetings that it conducts to keep itself up-to-date with new challenges. For the first time, it convenes also at ministerial level, which reflects the growing political significance of this aspect of the Agency's global work, and I am happy to participate.

Last year, I addressed the United Nations High Level Event on Nuclear Terrorism in New York. At that time, we all referred to the valuable work the Agency is doing in Vienna on nuclear security. The success of this work, however, is influenced by many factors that go beyond the narrow, technical definition of nuclear security. In Austria's view, we have to keep in mind how States handle all their nuclear activities, both military and civilian. While aligning myself with the statement made on behalf of the EU, let me refer to the following three aspects, which have shaped and continue to determine how we address nuclear challenges.

First, let me look at the military dimensions. In the 20th century, humankind utterly failed to settle its differences by diplomatic means. [And I consciously say this in the heart of Europe, which was at the origin of two world wars.] As a consequence, humankind has created a system of international organisations to foster peace and cooperation. Many inhuman weapon systems have been banned as a result of the intolerable suffering inflicted on soldiers and on civilians, including chemical and biological weapons among the weapons of mass destruction. This has not yet been achieved with nuclear weapons, which remain with us despite their indiscriminate character and unacceptable humanitarian consequences. In this context, humankind looks for the required leadership of the nuclear possessor states, foremost at Russia and the United States. On 19th June, I immediately welcomed the announcement by US President Obama in Berlin of his intention to take further nuclear disarmament steps beyond those agreed in the new START Treaty. Indeed, if Russia and the United States can agree on bold future steps, the other nuclear possessor

states will also have to follow. Some may consider global nuclear disarmament to be a distant dream, but I would argue that it should be an urgent global priority. It is just as much a priority as halting the proliferation of nuclear weapons. Austria has always advocated the view that both, nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation need to be seen as two sides of the same coin, as mutually reinforcing concepts that can only be achieved together. The only sustainable approach to address the challenges posed by nuclear weapons is to build credible political and legal barriers against nuclear weapons as such and to reduce and eliminate the perceived political and security motivations for the possession of these weapons.

Second, let me turn to the civilian nuclear fuel cycle. While humankind was aware of the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons, it took very leniently the safety risks of civilian nuclear installations and activities. Then the Chernobyl accident happened in 1986. It affected vast areas and many millions of people with its radioactive fall-out, including Austria. Only then, and thanks to the Agency in Vienna, did we take nuclear safety seriously at the global level. But the Fukushima accident in 2011 proved that a 100 per cent safety does not exist. However, it is possible to take precautions. The most effective precaution is not to use nuclear fission for the generation of power, a precaution that Austria even enshrined in its constitution. Thus we do not have any operating nuclear power plants and related fuel cycle activities. In addition, we have recently managed the conversion of our last remaining research reactor from High Enriched Uranium to Low Enriched Uranium thanks to the assistance and advice of the IAEA and other friends. Such risk reduction measures should be taken by all countries operating research reactors. Apart from being "nuclear free" like Austria, the second best precaution against nuclear accidents and security incidents would be to put all nuclear material and all nuclear facilities and activities under multilateral control in a way that assures that the highest standards for safety, security, and non-proliferation are met. Austria has made such a proposal both in the Agency as well as within the framework of the nuclear non-proliferation treaty. It is a "cradle to grave" approach that would address many of the current shortcomings.

Third, let me now focus on Nuclear Security under the Agency's definition. Austria has been a long-standing supporter of the Agency's activities in this field. We were among the first countries to contribute to the nuclear security fund, and now we continue with our contributions through the European Union. Furthermore, Austria led the countries that requested the diplomatic conference that adopted the amendment of the Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Material in 2005. We also actively support the work of the committee of the UN Security Council resolution 1540, and we have facilitated a coordinated input of international and regional organisations on "1540 matters". We hope that also civil society organisations will take up the opportunities for engagement after the civil society forum that was organised in January 2013 with the help of the new Vienna office of the UNODA. Earlier, together with Norway and the Nuclear Threat Initiative, we organized a

symposium to advance efforts for the elimination of High Enriched Uranium from civilian use. All these activities and actions were small steps, but they demonstrate that we do not lean back in our "nuclear free Austria", and that we continue with our engagement in global activities. Certainly, countries with a nuclear programme have a much bigger responsibility to bear. Here, I would like to recognise the news that this month, the US and Russia agreed on a framework to continue their non-proliferation partnership. This is a direct contribution to enhancing nuclear security through reducing nuclear threats. Indeed, there are many encouraging activities. Let us hope that we are spared a nuclear security night-mare of the scale of the disasters we experienced in the Second World War and with Chernobyl and Fukushima. The Agency, as the only organisation with a global mandate in this field, will have to play a central role in our drive to enhance global efforts.

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With these reflections I would like to commend the outcome document that was prepared for the ministerial segment of the conference. I would also like to wish all nuclear experts and conference participants a productive and fruitful week in Vienna.

I thank you for your attention.

