

Austria National Day

Nuclear disarmament a major priority

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Today, Oct. 26, Austrian National Day, is a welcome opportunity to share with the readers of this newspaper some thoughts about a priority of Austria's foreign and security policy i.e.

nuclear disarmament, the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons and ultimately a world free of weapons of mass destruction.

Ever since the end of World War II Austria has put its efforts toward the agenda of maintaining and expanding international peace and stability, for example by sending peace-keeping troops to support U.N. humanitarian missions or by functioning as a mediator for international disputes. And in the last decades a big part of Austria's peace policy has been dedicated to the elimination of the biggest threat to international peace and security — nuclear weapons. Austria holds the view that only a generalized abandonment and condemnation of such weapons can be the

ultimate solution.

In the framework of the Humanitarian Initiative, Austria has been working together with many other countries and organizations such as the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN) to reframe the debate on nuclear weapons. To further discuss consequences and risks, the Vienna Conference on the Humanitarian Impact of Nuclear Weapons 2014 was organized, providing key input for future work on nuclear disarmament. Concluding the conference, Austria issued a national pledge ("Austrian Pledge") committing itself to vigorously pursue its efforts toward nuclear disarmament. This pledge ended up being supported by 126 states and became known as the Humanitarian Pledge.

This pledge inspired the statement on the humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons delivered by Austrian Foreign Minister Sebastian Kurz on behalf of 159 states at the 2015 Review Conference of the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) in New York.

It also laid the foundation on which the U.N. General Assembly adopted a resolution, initiated by Austria and several other states, to convene a conference for the negotiation of a

prohibition of nuclear weapons under international law.

These treaty negotiations in New York were successfully concluded on July 7 with the adoption of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. One hundred and twenty-two states voted in favor of the treaty underlining the view that security is better served by a world without nuclear weapons, rather than with them. Austria was among the first 50 states to sign the treaty. Once 50 states have deposited their instruments of ratification, it will enter into force. This new treaty is a historic achievement that Austria is proud to have helped bring into existence.

It is a new instrument strengthening and complementing the existing international regime for nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament, especially the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons that entered into force in 1970 binding all parties to renounce nuclear weapons. The next Review Conference of the NPT will be held in 2020 to evaluate the implementation status of the measurements. In May the Preparatory Commission for the Review Conference met in Vienna to discuss the major challenges like compliance with non-proliferation.



The awarding of the Nobel Peace Prize 2017 to ICAN for their work related to raising awareness about the danger entailed by the existence of nuclear weapons is an important signal. Austria is proud to have been cooperating closely with ICAN toward achieving nuclear disarmament, a cornerstone of Austria's foreign policy.

The catastrophic humanitarian consequences of any use of such weapons, the risks associated with the existence of these weapons and the legal and moral dimension of this weaponry necessitate their irreversible and verifiable elimination. Austria will tirelessly continue to promote disarmament with the goal of once living in a world free of nuclear weapons.

Austrian Foreign Minister Sebastian Kurz at the Vienna Conference on the Humanitarian Impact of Nuclear Weapons 2014

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Greetings on the Austrian National Day

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