

**Austria – Statement**  
**XXIV Regular Session of the General Conference of**  
**OPANAL**  
**26 November 2015, 10:00 am**  
**Mexico City**

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*Mr. Chairman, distinguished delegations, L & G*

Despite our national legislation, Austria is, of course, not a member of a NWFZ, even though the concept of a NWFZ in Europe had been discussed on several occasions during the Cold war. Today, Europe remains the continent most affected by nuclear weapons. Nuclear weapons from four of the five Nuclear Weapons States are deployed on the European continent, also in Austria's neighbourhood. Unfortunately, we hear much talk again on our continent about nuclear deterrence and the supposed relevance of nuclear weapons in the context of the current security environment. We are gravely concerned about such developments.

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### *Non Proliferation Treaty*

Following Action 9 of the Action Plan of the 2010 NPT Review Conference, Austria and Switzerland therefore decided to examine the feasibility of establishing a NWFZ in Europe in more detail. We commissioned the Peace Research Institute Frankfurt (PRIF) to produce an academic study entitled „A Nuclear Weapon-Free Zone in Europe: Concept - Problems – Chances“. The Study provides a detailed analysis of different aspects with regard to a NWFZ in Europe. Against the backdrop of growing international tensions, the study aims to contribute constructively and innovatively to the discussions on collective security in Europe. Especially in such a period, the introduction of an innovative – albeit not new - issue could be particularly useful even if it may seem counter-intuitive or not a realistic prospect in the short term. We hope to stimulate such a discussion. The Study is available, inter alia on the website of the Austrian Foreign Ministry's homepage



Austria, as host of the Vienna Conference on the Humanitarian Impact of Nuclear Weapons, drew a set of conclusions and issued a national commitment, the "Austrian Pledge".

To date, 120 countries have formally endorsed and/or associated themselves with this commitment, which was renamed "Humanitarian Pledge" in May 2015 to underscore its international character. We are grateful that all member States of CELAC endorsed this pledge on the occasion of the Third Summit of CELAC, held in Belén, Costa Rica, on January 28 and 29, 2015.

Mr Chairman,

Nuclear weapons continue to pose an existential threat to humankind. On the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the creation of the United Nations and the first use of these weapons of mass destruction, the international community has an obligation to act.

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In light of the evidence available today about the global humanitarian impact and the risks associated with the existence of nuclear weapons, the arguments for the retention of nuclear weapons should be considered as an anachronistic high risk and ultimately irresponsible gamble based on an illusion of security and safety. As long as these weapons exist, the security of all humanity is dangerously diminished. The real issue is not the "use" of nuclear weapons nor "*who*" possesses them. There are no "right hands for the wrong weapons". We need to get away from the notion of threatening unacceptable global consequences and mass destruction as being a tool for security. This notion, as Pope Francis underscored at the beginning of the 70<sup>th</sup> Session of the General Assembly, is "self-contradictory and an affront to the entire framework of the United Nations". We hope that collectively we will be able to demonstrate that the facts and conclusions that have emerged in the past few years can be translated into concrete and