Open-Ended Working Group

"Taking forward multilateral nuclear disarmament negotiations"

General Exchange, 14-15 May 2013

Statement by Austria

Mr. Chairman,

At the outset, allow me to say how pleased we are to see you in the chair of this open-ended working group. We fully trust in your skilled leadership that will guide us very well in this new undertaking. The success of this group will depend on the constructive attitude and contributions that every single delegation will make to the work of this group.

What are our expectations for our work ahead? The expectations of the Austrian delegation, as one of the initiators of this open-ended working group, are three-fold:

First, we have the expectation that this working group of the United Nations General Assembly will contribute effectively to strengthening the multilateral response to a common concern of the UN membership – the lack of progress in nuclear disarmament. For my delegation, the establishment of this working group is also an important signal by the United Nations General Assembly of the importance of nuclear disarmament for the UN membership and the crucial role that multilateral efforts play in this regard. We are confident that this Working Group together with other initiatives could help put dynamics back into the multilateral nuclear disarmament machinery.

Second, we are of the expectation that we will work hard as a group. This working group has a deliberative mandate which will allow delegations to move beyond pre-prepared statements and engage in a dialogue, to learn from each other and develop new ideas and approaches through deliberation. In this light, today’s statement by the Austrian delegation will be the only pre-prepared one throughout our deliberations. We appreciate the informal mode of interaction foreseen for panel discussions, Mr. Chairman, which will serve us well in this regard. We also expect the working group to benefit strongly from the interaction with international organizations, academia and civil society during its work. We highly value the potential of academia and civil society to contribute through groundwork, to bring a variety of perspective and citizens’ expectations into the conference room and to challenge us with innovative approaches and new thinking.

Third, we expect this working group to offer us a unique opportunity to enter a more profound and comprehensive discussion about how to advance nuclear disarmament, to hear and learn from colleagues during our work and to jointly develop ideas and proposals throughout our deliberations on how to take multilateral nuclear disarmament efforts forward. One key aspect that has been lacking from the discourse of late is to look more closely at the different perceptions and divergent views that exist on nuclear disarmament. The OEWG would bring added value, if some of these issues could be addressed in the course of its work. These are, for instance to

- what extent nuclear disarmament and a world without nuclear weapons is a priority for the international community;
• what the respective obligations and commitments are;
• what actually constitutes nuclear disarmament and what is the benchmark for credible progress;
• what the roles and responsibilities of the different actors are and
• what the desirable and possible ways forward are.

The discussions foreseen during our meetings in May, such as on existing commitments and proposals, the role of non-nuclear weapon states in the multilateral framework or the different perspective on how to achieve and maintain a nuclear weapon free world, will offer plenty of opportunities for us to engage in more comprehensive discussions and work effectively towards fulfilling the mandate of this working group.

Mr. Chairman, we look forward to contributing to the work of this group.

Thank you.