High-level plenary meeting of the General Assembly to commemorate and promote the International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons

Pre-Recorded Statement by the Republic of Austria

Delivered by

H.E. Ambassador Alexander Kmentt

Director for Disarmament, Arms Control and Non-Proliferation

New York, 28 September 2021

Check against Delivery!
Excellencies, distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Nuclear disarmament is central foreign policy priority for Austria. And so on this International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons it fills me with particular pride that we have taken a historic step towards the goal of a world without Nuclear Weapons that we celebrate today.

The TPNW entered into force this year after its 50th ratification. This is the result of impressive international cooperation and expresses clear will by the overwhelming majority of the world. Following the additional insights gained on the catastrophic humanitarian consequences and risks of nuclear weapons, 159 countries signed on to the Humanitarian Statement of 2015 and over 130 adopted the Humanitarian Pledge, which led to the TPNW.

The motivations were clear - the consequences and risks of these inhumane and indiscriminate weapons, designed to cause widespread devastation – and potentially extinguish civilisation as we know it - are simply too grave. Nuclear weapons provide an illusion of security, they are a Damocles sword hanging above the very survival of mankind.

The urgency of progress on nuclear disarmament has never been greater - indeed the famous Doomsday Clock is today closer to midnight than at any time during the Cold War. Rather than make progress on disarmament, we see arsenals being upgraded, new weapon types being put into service, transparency waning and dangerous rhetoric about nuclear weapons by some. Although unproven and highly precarious, the nuclear deterrence mindset still prevails in many countries. It is high time to stop these dangerous developments and to engage constructively on the profound arguments underpinning the TPNW.

I am therefore pleased, that the first meeting of States Parties of the TPNW will take place in Vienna from 22 to 24 March 2022. Just like the negotiations, the first Meeting is open to all States, no matter where they stand on the Treaty and I invite all countries to join us in Vienna.

The TPNW is only a first step, but an essential one towards our joint goal of a world free of nuclear weapons. I am proud of the role that Austria was able to play with like-minded States and civil society organisations in bringing about this historic treaty and I call on all States to sign and ratify the TPNW to make the world more secure for everyone.

I thank you.