



PERMANENT
MISSION
OF AUSTRIA
TO THE UNITED
NATIONS IN VIENNA

Statement by
H.E. Alexander Schallenberg
Federal Minister for Europe, Integration and Foreign Affairs
of the Republic of Austria

at the 63rd IAEA General Conference
General Debate

*Madame President,
Acting Director General,
Excellencies,
Distinguished delegates,*

Let me start by warmly welcoming all delegations of this year's General Conference to Austria. And I have the particular pleasure to welcome the delegation of Saint Lucia, which has joined the Organization this year.

The last time I was here was for the sad occasion of the Memorial Ceremony in honour of the late Director General Yukiya Amano.

I would like to once more express my sincere condolences to his family and friends as well as to the staff of the IAEA.

We all in this room are grateful for what he achieved.

Austria therefore proudly supports the renaming of the Laboratory at Seibersdorf as "The Yukiya Amano Laboratories".

Madame President,

Allow me to congratulate you on your election and to assure you of the full support of my delegation.

Austria also clearly supports the statement given by the Vice-Minister of Energy of Finland on behalf of the European Union.

We all are aware that the International Atomic Energy Agency is faced with a very heavy political agenda.

In this context, our main focus remains the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action. The preservation of this agreement is critical for the reduction of the risk of nuclear proliferation not only in the Middle East but globally.

Austria therefore deeply regrets the withdrawal of the United States from the agreement and the re-imposition of sanctions on Iran.

At the same time, we are very concerned about activities in Iran which are inconsistent with its commitment under the agreement.

We have reached a critical point! It is now urgent that all parties show their political will and recommit to the agreement.

To be very clear: There is no way out of the current deadlock than by engaging in negotiations! There can be no other solution than a negotiated solution!

But, unfortunately, we are not only faced with the situation with Iran.

The nuclear activities in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea remain a cause for serious concern.

We therefore fully support the call upon the DPRK to cooperate with the IAEA and to comply fully with its obligations under UN Security Council resolutions.

There have been some positive signs over the last year, and we encourage all parties to continue on the path towards a complete and irreversible denuclearisation of the Korean Peninsula.

Madame President,

As the NPT clearly stipulates, the pursuit of non-proliferation has to go hand in hand with nuclear disarmament.

It was exactly this logic, which led to the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons.

In 2017, 122 countries reached a historical milestone by adopting this treaty.

In this context let me remind you of Article VI of the NPT which states explicitly:

"Each of the Parties to the Treaty undertakes to pursue negotiations in good faith on effective measures relating to cessation of the nuclear arms race at an early date and to nuclear disarmament, and on a treaty on general and complete disarmament under strict and effective international control."

The Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons is therefore not only a necessity in terms of ethics and security in view of the simply unacceptable catastrophic humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons.

It is also the implementation of a legal commitment we have laid down in the NPT.

Furthermore – once it enters into force – the Nuclear Weapon Ban Treaty will complement and reinforce the IAEA safeguards system on non-proliferation.

Madame President,

I know that in this room there are quite diverging views on the role of nuclear power and climate change.

And most of you are probably well aware of Austria's stance on this issue.

We do not consider nuclear power a sustainable way to generate electricity or to fight climate change.

On the contrary: Chernobyl and Fukushima have proven the enormous risks and costs of this technology for the population and the environment.

We therefore advocate for a controlled phasing out of nuclear power worldwide and we encourage countries to make full use of renewable energies and to improve their energy efficiency and savings.

However, as long as nuclear power is still used, we have to share the common goal to ensure that the highest standards on nuclear safety and security are applied.

I therefore welcome the Agency's efforts in this regard and encourage Member States to become Parties to the relevant international legal instruments in this field.

Madame President,

Austria regards the Technical Co-operation Programme of the Agency as an integral part of its activities.

While we retain reservations about nuclear energy, we fully support the Agency's activities in the wider area of non-power applications of peaceful nuclear science and technology.

For this reason, I would like to announce that Austria will continue its contribution to the Technical Cooperation Fund in 2020.

In closing, I would like to underline that Austria is honoured and privileged to host the International Atomic Energy Agency in Vienna since 1957.

We deeply appreciate the work done by the Agency. And I can assure you that Austria and its government will continue to strongly support it also in the future.

I wish you, Madame President, and all of us a successful General Conference.

Thank you for your attention.