

AUSTRIA



PERMANENT MISSION OF AUSTRIA
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Statement

by

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of the

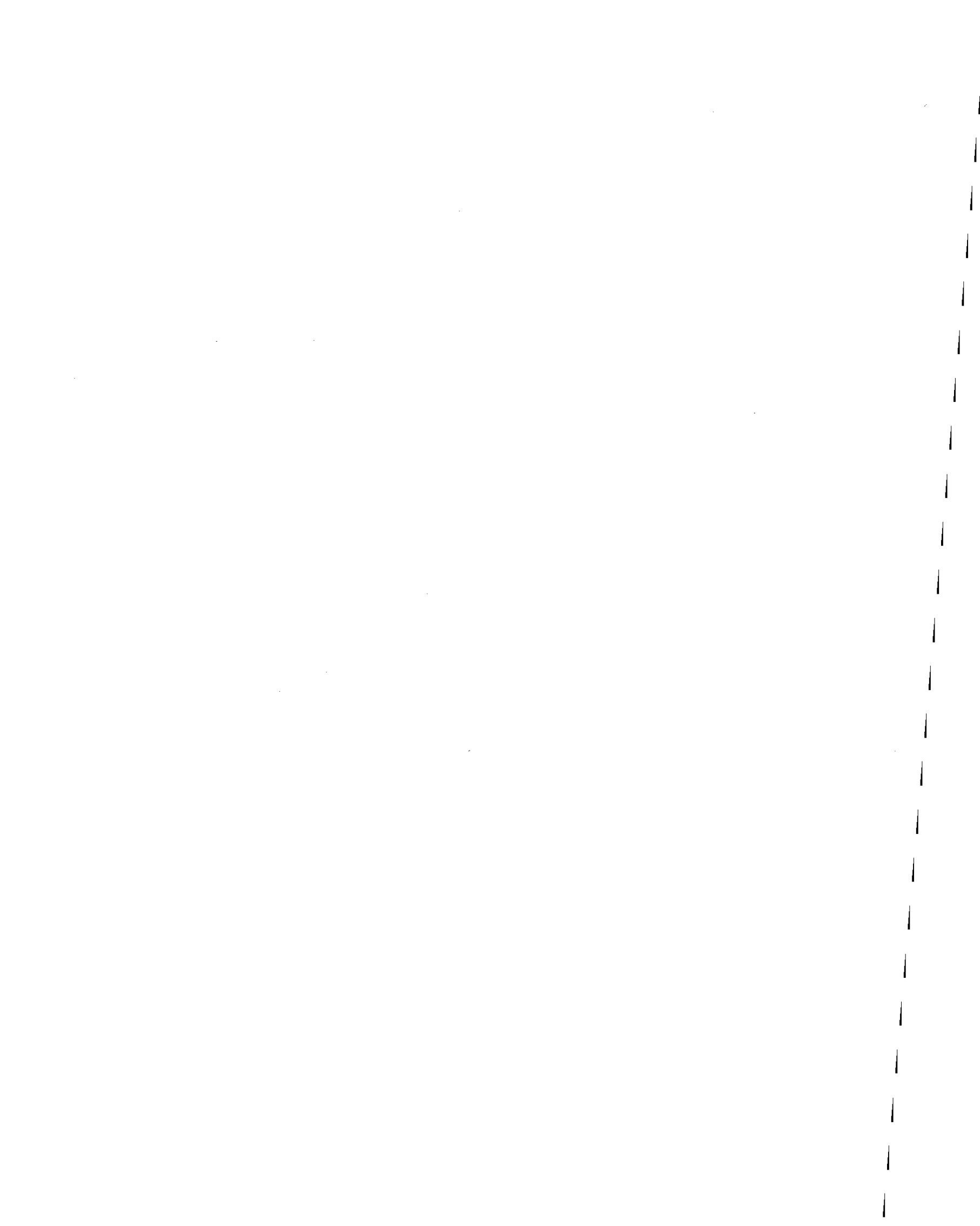
Republic of Austria

at the

**66th Session of the General Assembly
of the United Nations**

New York, 24 September 2011

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Mr. President,
Foreign Ministers,
Distinguished delegates to the 66th General Assembly of the United Nations,

This year has once again confirmed the importance of the United Nations as the truly indispensable multilateral forum to address today's global problems: the humanitarian crisis at the Horn of Africa, ecological disasters such as Fukushima, political developments like the Arab spring or terrorist attacks such as the assault on the UN building in Abuja last August require concerted action by the UN and its Member States. 10 years after 9/11, joint action in the fight against terrorism continues to remain central on the multilateral agenda.

Mr. President, Ladies and Gentlemen,

In the last nine months we have witnessed momentous changes in the Arab World that nobody expected when we met one year ago. Pressure for change is driven by the wish of women and men to choose their own fate and to improve their chances for a better life. These are legitimate demands. An overwhelming number of young people were at the forefront of this gigantic tide, which started in Tunisia and Egypt and we should pay tribute to their courage.

In Libya, thousands lost their lives in the struggle for freedom and democracy. In Syria, and to some extent in Yemen, the suppression is ongoing. Austria strongly condemns the systematic human rights violations and the violence against peaceful demonstrators. We strongly urge those responsible to immediately stop the bloodshed and to engage in meaningful dialogue and reforms.

Austria supports the Libyan people in its struggle for freedom. Over 150 million Euros, blocked on Austrian bank accounts, have been de-frozen for humanitarian

use. Both the Austria government and the private sector provided medicine, relief supplies and desperately needed fuel to Libya.

The international community and the United Nations have to support and to accompany the transition process in the Arab world as the UN does now in Libya. This period of change may last for some time and will be full of challenges. Austria welcomes all efforts undertaken by governments in the region for peaceful and credible change. We encourage the newly empowered authorities to create a constitutional framework based on democracy and human rights in order to fulfil their mandate for democratic change responsibly and peacefully.

Notwithstanding the events in the Arab world we must keep focusing on the Middle East peace process. The Middle East took centre stage this week here at the General Assembly. And rightly so. We must build trust and we have to foster the belief among Israelis and Palestinians that a negotiated settlement can be achieved - a sustainable solution based on two states living side by side in a secure and peaceful neighbourhood within mutually recognized borders. We have no choice but to return to direct negotiations between the two parties. The Quartet in its statement of yesterday has shown a way how to do this and has also proposed concrete timelines. Austria fully supports the Quartet statement. There is no time to lose.

Austria welcomes President Al-Nasser's choice for this year's general debate and we appreciate the strong track record of Qatar in this regard. Last year's 10th anniversary of the adoption of Security Council resolution 1325 on women, peace and security reminded us that the promise of women's full and equal participation in all efforts of maintaining peace and security, including in mediation processes, has not yet come true and that we all need to intensify our efforts.

In this context, let me also mention an Austrian contribution to international mediation efforts. By inviting political decision-makers from both Khartoum and Juba

to Vienna in recent years, Austria has managed to offer the two sides a platform to meet. We are ready to continue to do so. Both Sudan and South Sudan have a shared past and must resolve their remaining problems peacefully.

Mr. President, Ladies and Gentlemen,

The UN Headquarters in Vienna serve as a dynamic hub for the promotion of peace, security and sustainable development. I am proud to announce that a liaison office of the UN Office of Disarmament Affairs (UNODA) will be opening in Vienna soon. Over the last year, the International Anti-Corruption Academy (IACA) set up its headquarters near Vienna and the Vienna Centre for Disarmament and Non-Proliferation as well as an office of the International Peace Institute (IPI) were established.

Austria fully stands behind the campaign launched by the Secretary General on Monday to achieve universal access to modern energy services. We support to double the rate of improvement in energy efficiency and the share of renewable energy in the global energy mix by 2030.

Austria provides substantial support to the energy and environment efforts undertaken by UNIDO. We hosted the Vienna Energy Forum in June 2011, where about 1.400 participants discussed alternative energy concepts to reach the energy-goals of the United Nations.

The Fukushima nuclear catastrophe should become a turning point in our approach to nuclear safety. We owe it to future generations that safety concerns come first when using nuclear power. Austria decided in 1978 to forego the use of nuclear energy. Some countries have recently adopted a similar course, which we welcome.

Mr. President, Ladies and Gentlemen,

The last time I spoke at the UN, it was during the Thematic Debate on the Rule of Law and Global Challenges in April. This was an important step in the preparation of the High Level Meeting on the rule of law, which will take place in September 2012. Next year's Meeting will provide an important opportunity to renew both the UN's and the Member States' efforts to promote the rule of law. As a medium-sized country and as a strong supporter of multilateralism, Austria attaches particular importance to the rule of law, also at the international level. The international system can only properly function if based on clear and predictable rules which equally apply to all Member States.

The promotion and protection of human rights is a core priority of Austria's foreign policy. We are proud to serve on the Human Rights Council for the period 2011-2014. For our membership in this body, Austria has identified the following priorities on which we will take action.

Austria is firmly committed to the respect for freedom of religion and belief. We are deeply troubled by recurring attacks against religious minorities in all parts of the world and among all religions. To foster tolerance, Austria has hosted a number of high-level dialogues between religious and secular leaders over the last decade. We think this has become a new and promising field of modern diplomacy, putting the emphasis on conflict prevention.

Various forms of child trafficking and exploitation constitute gross violations of children's rights. As a member of the Human Rights Council, Austria will work to address this issue and to help develop counter-strategies. We highly appreciate the

work of the Special Representative of the Secretary General for Children and Armed Conflict, Radhika Coomaraswamy, and strongly support the renewal of her mandate.

Racism, xenophobia and discrimination on grounds of ethnic origin, gender, age, sexual orientation or religious belief are ongoing challenges and of concern to all of us. Austria is committed to the fight against these abuses including anti-Semitism. Therefore, we will continue to press for action also in the framework of the United Nations. We will also take initiatives during our membership in the Human Rights Council to strengthen the protection of journalists against all forms of threat and intimidation.

Austria has a 50 year long track record of contributing to UN peacekeeping operations. We will continue our engagement and have recently decided to deploy 160 Austrian troops to the UN Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) in addition to our continued presence in UNDOF and UNTSO. Through the participation in UNIFIL, Austria wishes to make an active contribution to the maintenance of peace and security not only in Lebanon but in the region as a whole.

Austria welcomes the positive momentum in international security policy over the last couple of years. We salute the determined leadership of the Secretary General with his five Point Plan on Disarmament. We look forward to continue our work under this positive spirit at the first NPT Preparatory Committee in Vienna in May next year and hope for progress with regard to a Nuclear Weapon Free Zone in the Middle East.

Nevertheless, despite our collective efforts, we have not been able to move forward on new disarmament and arms control issues. The multilateral machinery, and in

particular the Conference on Disarmament, remains in deadlock. Unfortunately the momentum that we had hoped to generate over the past year has not materialized.

Thus, in Austria's view, the Conference on Disarmament has not only lost its credibility, but is also risking its legitimacy. Austria will therefore encourage a resolution at the next session of the First Committee on how to move forward multilateral disarmament negotiations.

Mr. President, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Austria remains committed to multilateralism and to the United Nations as the noblest form of international cooperation. Therefore, we will support your efforts, Mr. President, and that of the Secretary General to further strengthen our organisation to better enable us to face the challenges of our time.