



Statement by
H.E. Alexander Schallenberg
Austrian Federal Minister for European and International Affairs
Vienna, 26 September 2022

Mr President,
Distinguished Director-General, dear Rafael,
Ladies and gentlemen!

As **proud host country**, it is a pleasure to welcome all of you to Vienna!

A particularly warm welcome to the delegations of
Saint Kitts and Nevis as well as Tonga,
who have joined the Agency since our last meeting.

Colleagues,

Since our last general conference, we have witnessed **monumental shifts** on the European continent.

War has returned to Europe.

With the unprovoked aggression by a **nuclear armed state**
against its sovereign neighbour.

It is a war in Europe, but **not a European war**. Its **shockwaves** are felt around the world.

A fact that became again very obvious during **last week's UN General Assembly**.

Russia's brutal invasion of Ukraine has been accompanied by **explicit nuclear blackmail** and the **occupation of the Zaporizhzhya nuclear power plant** – the largest in Europe – by Russian armed forces.

These actions show an **alarming degree of irresponsibility**, risking **catastrophic consequences** for all of us.

I would like to take this opportunity to **salute your leadership, dear Rafael**, and the **determination and expertise of your whole team at the Agency!**

They are **our insurance**, **our eyes and ears** on the ground and give us at **least some sense of security** in these troubling times.

Austria stands **fully behind you, Rafael, and the Agency**.

And we fully support the **establishment of a safety zone** around the **Zaporizhzhya** plant.

This is **the responsible and logical thing** to do.

Ladies and gentlemen!

Over the past months, Vienna has hosted the **Iran nuclear talks**.

We are **grateful for the EU's untiring efforts to enable** all sides to return to the full **participation *in* and compliance *with*** the **JCPOA**.

This is crucial if we want to **avoid a nuclear arms race** in the region. With **disastrous consequences** for our security and stability.

It is very **disappointing** that there is **still no agreement**. The **window of opportunity** is almost closed.

Meanwhile, Iran is increasing its **stockpile of highly enriched uranium**. Serving **no civilian purpose**.

In terms of **safeguards**, I call on Iran to **fully cooperate with the IAEA** and provide the necessary information.

Colleagues,

The developments of recent months have **shaken the entire nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation regime to the core**.

Nuclear risks have not been this high for decades.

And yet, the **mechanisms** we put into place to deal with it **are not working**.

The **NPT Review Conference was a failure.**

And **not just because Russia** decided to **block consensus** on the final document.

We must be **clear-eyed** that the **whole process was disappointing.**

Because of the **unwillingness of nuclear weapons states** to move forward on nuclear disarmament.

And because many still believe in the **logic of nuclear deterrence.**
A logic that I **fundamentally disagree with.**

Because **deterrence requires credibility.**

Meaning the **readiness to actually use** nuclear weapons.

This is nothing less than a **massive nuclear Damocles sword** hanging over all our **heads.**

This **downward spiral** must serve as a **wake-up call.**

The **nuclear status quo** is **not sustainable.**

We need a new momentum, a **paradigm shift.**

Such as the one **represented by the TPNW.**

I am proud that the **1st Meeting of States Parties** in June in Vienna delivered concrete results:

A **strong condemnation** of all nuclear threats
and an **ambitious program** to implement the Treaty.

Austria will not tire to convince others of the **positive transformational power** of the TPNW.

Excellencies,

Next to **nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation**,
we are all faced with the **urgent task to diversify** and
decarbonize our energy sources.

We suffer from high energy prices and Russia's **cynical use of energy as a weapon**.

Our citizens rightly look to us for answers.

But I underline – once again – that Austria does **not consider nuclear fission** as a **sustainable or safe** way to generate electricity nor
to fight **climate change**.

We should rather **invest in renewable energy technologies** that are
simple and quick to implement,
easy to maintain, and
without the safety, security and proliferation risks of nuclear power.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The **challenges** before us **are far-reaching**.

Yet I am convinced that we have the **tools in hand to meet them**.

If we use this **Agency and its independent expertise** in the way we are meant to.

And if we respect the letter and the spirit of the NPT.

Thank you.