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**Statement**

**by**

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**Federal Minister for Foreign Affairs**

**of the Republic of Austria**

**at**

**the 59th Session of the**

**United Nations General Assembly**

**New York, September 23, 2004**

Mr. President,

I should like to begin by congratulating you on your election as president of the 50 session of this assembly. You may be assured that Austria will fully support you in carrying out your important task.

I fully subscribe to the statement made by the Foreign Minister of the Netherlands on behalf of the European Union, which expressed the position of the European Union regarding the various global and regional challenges we face today. I would like to emphasize a few additional points from our own perspective.

Mr. President

In the last years we had to reassess key concepts of our national and international security environment. With the emergence of new and complex threats, in particular terrorism in combination with the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, the international community faces unprecedented challenges for which it has to find legitimate responses. Just recently we witnessed the horrifying terrorist attack against innocent school children in Beslan. This was only the last of a whole series of heinous attacks in all regions of the world targeted against innocents.

Austria is committed to the full cooperation with other States and UN bodies involved in counter-terrorism and works to promote the whole range of UN action against terrorism. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime in Vienna and its Terrorism Prevention Branch (TPB) make an important contribution by rendering assistance to Member States with regard to implementing national legislation required by Resolution 1373 and building national capacity.

Austria is convinced that only effective multilateralism based on the rule of law can address the new and complex challenges that the international community faces today. We support the efforts of the Quartet in the Middle East Peace Process and urge Israel and the Palestinians to implement their respective obligations. The Road Map remains the only way forward towards a just, comprehensive and lasting settlement to the Arab-Israeli conflict leading to two States living side by side in peace and security.

The United Nations continue to play a key role in South Eastern Europe, especially in Kosovo. We welcome the recent appointment of Mr. Soren Jessen-Petersen as Special Representative for Kosovo. Within the EU the countries of the regional partnership, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia and Austria, presented concrete proposals with regard to security, economic development decentralization and protection of minorities and of religious sites. We are confident that they can contribute to progress in Kosovo.

International and regional efforts are essential to contain and solve the various conflicts in other regions of the world. The dramatic situation in Darfur highlights the need for better harmonization of international efforts of the UN, the African Union, the EU, the Arab League, the United States and other actors. We will have to examine carefully the results of the current mission of the new Special Adviser for the Prevention of Genocide together with the High Commissioner of Human Rights to Darfur.

Such missions and mechanisms are indeed the tools that the UN needs to effectively address emerging crisis situations. Strengthening of the rule of law, human rights, democratic

participation and economic development will reduce conflicts within societies and among states turning violent. To be a credible multilateral player, the UN must be given the necessary institutional framework to enact effective strategies at all stages of conflict.

Austria therefore welcomed the Secretary General's call for reform and in particular his initiative to establish a High-Level Panel of Eminent Persons to propose specific measures for institutional innovation by the end of the year. I was happy to meet with the members of the Panel when it held its meeting in Austria earlier this year.

One item high up on the Panel's agenda is Security Council reform. Austria, like many other countries, is concerned about the growing gap between the Council's current composition, on the one hand, and the changing political, economic and social reality of the community of nations, on the other.

It is essential to enlarge and balance the membership of the Security Council, as well as to increase its transparency. For all peoples to identify with its decisions, we must ensure that the Security Council is a body that truly reflects the diversity of the world's cultures and regions by an improved representation of regions such as Africa, Asia and Latin America.

As you know, it is my personal vision that, in the longer term, the European Union should also be represented in the Security Council. I had already pointed out at the General Debate last year, that this would be the logical consequence of further European integration in the field of common foreign and security policy.

Mr. President,

The United Nations has been at the centre of Austria's foreign policy ever since we became a member after repining our full independence in 1955. We have always strongly supported the principles and purposes of the United Nations and remain committed to the goals of the UN-Charter.

Austria feels honoured and privileged to host one of the UN's headquarters. This year, we celebrate the 25th anniversary of the opening of the Vienna International Centre, home to many UN-Institutions. The work of these organizations with respect to nuclear non-proliferation, the IAEA and the CTBTO PrepCom, as well as UNIDO's development cooperation, as well as the fight against 'uncivil society' by the UNODC, contribute substantially to the international community's efforts to confront the world's new security threats.

Dear Delegates,

In this spirit of full and honest commitment to the United Nations, I would like to recall that Austria is a candidate for a non-permanent seat on the Security Council for the term 2009/2010. Our candidature, announced over five years ago in February 1999, results from our willingness to contribute actively and constructively to the maintenance of international peace and security. We fully recognise the heavy responsibility which Security Council membership entails. We are ready to assume it.

**Over the past 50 years, Austria has sought to contribute effectively to the work of the United Nations, in particular in the fields of peace and security, human rights, development, disarmament and international law.**

**We are a significant contributor to UN peacekeeping operations and have traditionally been among the largest European troop contributors. Since 1963, over 50.000 Austrians have served in more than fifty UN missions worldwide. At the same time, Austria strives to promote the deepening and broadening of knowledge and expertise on critical peacekeeping policy issues. This year's annual International Peace Academy Vienna Seminar, as one example, was dedicated to Peace Operations in Africa.**

**Mr. President,**

**Security, as we see it, is human security. It is the kind of security all human beings are looking for: among them millions of civilians in all parts of the world affected by armed conflict, the majority of them women and children, and 40 million people living with the HIV virus. Human security transcends the concept of "hard threats" and "soft threats". If we see those threats through the prism of the human beings concerned it becomes clear that for the afflicted individual all of those threats – be they war or hunger, terrorism or deadly disease – deprive them of their security.**

**To work for Human Security requires us to work together to fight the scourge of trafficking in human beings. We actively supported the elaboration of the UN protocol on trafficking in persons, which forms the legal basis for determined international action to punish traffickers and to protect victims. The efforts of UNODC's global programme on trafficking in human beings are highly commendable.**

**The proliferation of small arms and light weapons continues to be a serious threat to human security. The UN-Programme of Action against the illicit trade of those weapons must be strengthened. First steps have already been taken with regard to the problem of marking and tracing of weapons, steps that may lead to a legally binding regime.**

**Austria is honoured to chair the first Review Conference of the Antipersonnel Mine Ban Convention in Nairobi later this year where the International Community will chart a course for the solution of the landmine problem in the coming years. The Mine Ban Convention has become a true example of a successful and effective multilateral approach to address a global problem. I encourage all States to participate at the Nairobi Summit at the highest possible level.**

**As a Member of the Human Security Network, we cooperate with others to promote human security in the world. As one concrete example, Austria - together with Slovenia and Jordan - initiated and funded an aid project for traumatised children in Iraq. I am convinced that applying a human security perspective to international problems has the potential of energising political processes aimed at preventing or solving conflicts and promoting peace and development.**

Mr. President,

We also need to reflect further on how best to ensure respect for human rights during conflicts, how to incorporate human rights into preventive policies and how to formulate post-conflict strategies apt to achieve lasting reconciliation and the building of a firm basis for the rule of law and good governance. In this respect, Human Rights Education is an important element to get at the root of the vicious circle of conflict and human rights violations.

Violence between ethnic groups and religious communities has shaken countries across the globe. In particular, the disregard of the needs and the rights of minorities tends to fuel violent conflict. Our endeavours for the protection of the rights of minorities are still highly needed, not the least to ensure that ethnic cleansing or genocide will never happen again. We know that the Secretary General feels very strongly about the need for "speed of action" to prevent the most heinous crimes. I share his concerns. Early-warning mechanisms, such as the Special Adviser for Genocide, are indeed very useful tools for quicker responses to emerging threats.

Mr. President,

The Austrian Government is convinced that it is an essential responsibility of the United Nations and its member states to address the root causes of conflict. Global poverty, inequality, competition for scarce resources, environmental degradation and the spread of infectious diseases, such as HIV/AIDS, are among the ingredients that fuel the outbreak of conflicts both within countries and among states.

The Austrian Development Policy has placed a particular focus on poverty reduction, maintenance of peace and the protection of the environment. I am pleased to inform you that Austria has increased its development aid by 35% this year. In the field of environment and sustainable energy, we have initiated and promoted the Global Forum for Sustainable Energy, which aims at providing access to energy for people in developing countries. We consider issues, such as climate change, the decline of biodiversity and other forms of environmental degradation as essential factors of our comprehensive security agenda.

Mr. President,

Let me finally highlight an issue, which the Secretary General has made a central theme of his speech to the General Assembly. The key guarantee for creating and maintaining peace and security in the world has been and will be an international system based on the rule of law. This was the very idea of the founders of the United Nations.

Austria has always supported the elaboration of international conventions and norms by the United Nations and welcomed the establishment of international criminal tribunals and of the International Criminal Court. I am convinced that the creation of this Court is a milestone in the development of international law. It is my sincere hope that all States, including those currently not parties to the Rome Statute, will over time come to the conclusion that the establishment of a universal system of justice for crimes against humanity is in the common interest of all nations.

I particularly welcome the Secretary General's pledge two days ago that he will make the UN's work to strengthen the rule of law and transitional justice in conflict and post-conflict

**societies a priority for the remainder of his tenure. In particular for smaller and medium sized countries, an international order based on the rule of law is of paramount importance.**

**With this in mind, I would like to announce today that I have launched a discourse on the role and function of the Security Council in the strengthening of a rules-based international system. As a first step, we will organize a panel of international legal experts during the "International Law Week" at the UN here in New York in November of this year, which will analyze the increasing law-making tendency of the Security Council.**

**Mr. President, dear Delegates,**

**This is my last speech as Austrian Foreign Minister. As you may know, I have been nominated Commissioner of the European Union for External Relations and European Neighbourhood Policy. This function will, of course, keep me in close contact with many of you and with the United Nations. I would like to use this opportunity today to thank all colleagues, members of delegations and in particular the Secretariat, in which I had the honour to serve myself, for the support that has been extended to me and my staff here in New York over the past years. A special and warm expression of gratitude and respect goes to Secretary General Kofi Annan. To you, Mr. President, I would like to extend my best wishes for a successful and constructive 59th session of the General Assembly.**