

# AUSTRIA



PERMANENT MISSION OF AUSTRIA  
TO THE UNITED NATIONS

**Statement**

**by**

**Ursula Plassnik**

**Federal Minister for Foreign Affairs**

**of the Republic of Austria**

**at**

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**United Nations General Assembly**

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**Check against delivery!**

Madam President, Ladies and Gentlemen,

**"United in Diversity"**. This motto of the European Union expresses

- what we 25, and soon 27, Member States of the European Union demand from ourselves, as well as
- our aspirations for these United Nations.

"United in Diversity" is also a call we have to heed in our practical, every-day work for more justice, peace, freedom and prosperity.

Austria has consistently aimed at translating this principle into practice: as host country to the only UN headquarters within the European Union, as President of the European Union in the first semester of 2006, and as a venue for the dialogue of religions and cultures.

We also answer this call as peacekeepers, despite recent bitter experiences such as the tragic death of Major Hans-Peter Lang while serving for the UN in Southern Lebanon.

Madam President,

With the establishment of the Human Rights Council in Geneva and the Peace Building Commission, we have given ourselves new instruments for an important part of our work in this phase of the reform of the United Nations.

Austria thanks Jan Eliasson, President of the 60<sup>th</sup> General Assembly, for his vision, his tenacity and his endurance. We owe it to his negotiating skills that the institutional reform of the UN was set in motion decisively. And we pledge to devote the necessary determination to the **reform measures** that still need to be implemented such as the management reform, the review of UN mandates, and the establishment of the rule of law assistance unit.

After decades of division **Europe today** is growing together again. This is the major achievement of the European Union. We have come a long way. The Iron Curtain is a relic of the past. Today, we want the countries of Southeast Europe and the Balkans to take their rightful place in Europe, to include them in the **re-unification** process of our continent. The European experience is profoundly an experience of overcoming old and bitter conflicts and of the power of patient and peaceful transformation.

Let me, at this point, welcome to the General Assembly the newest European and 192<sup>nd</sup> member of the United Nations, the Republic of **Montenegro**.

In Europe, difficult issues need to be solved. Tomorrow the Security Council will discuss the future status of **Kosovo**. Austria supports the efforts of President Ahtisaari and the UNOSEK team in Vienna. As neighbours and friends we urge both Belgrade and Pristina to engage in these negotiations constructively, in a result-oriented manner, and with the necessary sense of realism. Our goal is a democratic and multi-ethnic Kosovo all of whose citizens can live in security and dignity, on the basis of mutual trust. In the same spirit, a confident, peaceful and prosperous Serbia fully integrated into the family of European nations is crucial for the stability of the whole region.

Madam President,

In the **Middle East**, innocent civilians still suffer from the disastrous consequences of terror attacks or the indiscriminate use of force. Men, women and children on all sides must be given a real chance to live in peace and in an atmosphere of increasing mutual trust. The goal Austria pursues in her relations with the Middle East: Palestinians and Israelis, living side-by-side as neighbours in two states, in security, and working towards a peaceful and economically successful common future.

We know that the path towards this goal is rocky but we now have reached a turning point. In the aftermath of the armed conflict in Lebanon, all parties in the region have accepted the need for a new, substantive engagement of the international community. The European Union and its Member States can and will make a substantive contribution. At the same time, the efforts of President Abbas to form a government of national unity in the Palestinian territories deserve our full support.

Yesterday's statement by the Middle East Quartet, in which the United Nations plays such a central role, is another encouraging signal. We hope that these decisions will help to alleviate the plight of the Palestinian people and move the peace process forward.

Austria is convinced that the work of the Middle East Quartet should now pave the way towards a major Middle East peace initiative. We see great merit in an international Middle East conference along the lines of the Madrid Conference of 1991. We believe that such a forum should be open to all regional partners who are willing to participate constructively in search of a comprehensive peace settlement. A conference of this kind could also examine the longer term potential for regional security arrangements.

As the Secretary General has rightly pointed out, one of our main priorities must remain **Africa**. In particular, we must engage to prevent a humanitarian catastrophe in **Darfur**: it is simply unacceptable that not even relief agencies are given access to help those most in need. It is deeply disturbing that there is no clear perspective for an end to fighting and suffering in this region. As many others, we therefore urgently call upon the government of Sudan to accept the deployment of a UN Peace Keeping Force in Darfur without delay.

Madam President,

Austria has a strong understanding for the need of the **dialogue of cultures and religions**. This is because my country lies at the crossroads of many different cultures, at the heart of a continent marked by centuries of wars and confrontations.

Our own difficult experience has certainly taught us that mutual tolerance and respect are universal values which we must all uphold and that religious beliefs, by their very nature, must never be misused to justify violence.

In view of our own experience we are also convinced that the dialogue of religions and cultures is not only a challenge in the international field; this dialogue begins at

home, within our own societies. Here, as well as at the regional or global level, "United in Diversity" must be our guiding principle.

We have to keep our work down to earth. We have to find answers on how best to organise living together; we have to provide orientation in a rapidly globalising world that many regard as a menace. Ultimately, it is at the work place, at school, when defining the role of women in society, when seeking to create opportunities for young people, in the media, that we decide about the outcome of the "dialogue of cultures" in real life terms. I am therefore convinced that we must better integrate the dialogue of religions and cultures in the every day work of the United Nations.

This is a topic we cannot leave to the street. The mine field of collective emotions is not a good place to discuss questions of belief. Complex feelings of frustration, humiliation, and neglect can erupt at the slightest provocation. In a world where connections are established by a single mouse click, reactions arrive within minutes. Here we need to counteract on the basis of our common values, in full conformity with the universal human rights and basic freedoms, as they are the very foundation of our work in the United Nations.

In 61 years of United Nations you are [ H.E. Sheikha Haya Rashed Al Khalifa is] only the third woman to preside over the General Assembly, and the first woman to do so coming from the Arab world. While congratulating you personally on being elected to this high position Austria also regards your election as a signal to all **women** in the world: the time has come for women to take their rightful place in all spheres of public life. We are called upon to engage politically at all levels, from the community level to the United Nations.

The voices of women need to be heard more clearly in the work of the United Nations. Women know what holds families, communities and societies together. This age old knowledge in all its modern variety and colour should not be left untapped, in particular in peace processes. In UN missions, at the negotiation table, in decision making processes, and not only as voices in the background. During her Presidency of the European Union, Austria in her recruitment strategy, consistently aimed at deploying women in EU peace missions. In addition, we elaborated guidelines for EU missions on how to best comply with the special needs of **children**.

In his speech on Tuesday the Secretary General rightly said: "it is shameful that last year's Summit Outcome does not contain even one word about **non-proliferation and disarmament**". Austria calls for a renewed commitment of the international community to these security goals. We also offer to host the next preparatory meeting to the NPT Review Conference in Vienna in spring 2007.

Madam President,

Development and the preservation of our livelihoods demand sustainable solutions. Among the great global challenges we are facing is **climate change**. Global warming is real. Austria is committed to do its part in combating it. However, in Austria's view nuclear energy is not the right answer; it bears too many risks and uncertainties to be regarded as safe and sustainable source of energy.

**Solidarity** is at the heart of the United Nations. Solidarity with the poor, the weak, and the powerless. Here, the UN task list for the coming years is rich: achieving the **Millennium Development Goals** in full, concluding the **Doha Development Round**, fighting against hunger, diseases, poverty and exclusion.

On Tuesday, we launched the UN Global Counter-**Terrorism** Strategy with a clear message: the international community is united against this scourge of humanity. We will not tolerate terrorism in any of its forms and manifestations. And we will redouble our efforts to dry up the breeding grounds from which terrorism feeds itself.

Let me in this context point out the excellent work of the UN Office on Drugs and Crime in Vienna, with its Terrorism Prevention Branch, in delivering technical assistance to UN member states.

It is in the respect for diversity and in recognizing the need for unity that Austria has presented her **candidature** for a non-permanent seat in the **Security Council** for the period 2009-10. With this in mind, we have made the rule of law the backbone of our candidature.

Madam President,

Let me close with conveying Austria's appreciation for the great personality who has been standing at the helm of this organisation for the last decade, for Kofi Annan, the statesman and the person. We thank the Secretary General, in particular for being a tireless encourager, despite the considerable obstacles he had to face at times. He is a role model for dignity and confidence. He is always ready to speak out, in his soft but firm voice, for those whose voices are not strong or loud enough to be heard; to give voice to the weak, the poor, the small, and those who feel lost or abandoned.

Secretary General, the world will continue listening to your voice as it is the voice of hope and steadfastness.

Thank you for your attention.