

Aug. 8 Forum

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It is extremely impressive to come here to see both memorials to the atomic bomb explosions in Hiroshima and Nagasaki but also especially to meet all engaged and dedicated people working to keep the memories alive, to make progress to save the humanity from the scourge of war since 1945. I am deeply impressed already by your engagement I found here.

I will talk about three things very briefly.

One is about the heightened danger we face today, possibly the highest since the Cold War. Second, I will talk about Austria's role, what we do and our unique position. Lastly, I want to touch on how we plan to continue to work together with civil society to get both the TPNW to enter into force and to make progress on the implementation of the NPT, in order to achieve the total elimination of nuclear weapons.

First let me address challenges. I think it is worth reflecting on the danger of the end of the INF Treaty. The INF took us away from an expert-estimated 5-8 minutes to react incoming missiles. That is an incredibly short time when you think about the time it takes to detect missiles and their direction and to make a decision on whether or not to launch a counter missiles.

Another important danger if medium-range missiles are redeployed to Europe is the question of warheads - countries seeing incoming missiles have no idea whether there is a nuclear or conventional warhead. It is easy to exchange them. So the dangers are extremely high and we are concerned about rumors of a re-stationing of medium range missiles. We are also very concerned about the renewal of the START Treaty, as well as negotiations for a successor. We don't see encouraging signs here.

These are just some of the immediate challenges. But there are also challenges which don't get enough attention. One is hypersonic missiles which dramatically increase the danger of shortened notice. Their dramatically speed increase will cause a push for countries to rely more and more on automatisisation. Computer programs would then increasingly be involved in taking decisions of life and death of hundreds of thousands or millions of people. We have seen the lack of reliability of these systems in history. The fact that we are here is exactly because people like Stanislav Petrov did not believe machines. It took human reasons to prevent the end of the world, something a machine can never have. Given the data, any machine would have immediately launched a counterstrike in the Petrov case. So it is absolutely central that humans are in charge of decisions. Nuclear weapons must never be automatically triggered.

Danger of cyber weapons: Other important elements are cyber weapons and warfare in the cyber sphere which create lots of uncertainty about the control of one's own systems and can lead to

miscalculations and misattribution.

Indeed it is often extremely hard if not impossible to tell where an attack originates from – a country, terrorist actors, etc. Miscalculations are also real, particularly when you consider that some doctrines, prominently by the US, consider the option of responding to cyber-attacks with nuclear weapons.

Weaponization of space: Another area we are concerned about is the danger of the weaponization of space. We already see some first steps now, with announcements of a space force or space command. The repercussions are many. Looking at the structure of nuclear weapons command systems, for example, space assets are constantly used to monitor other states' weapons to decide whether or not a nuclear attack has been launched. Once a country satellites are taken out, miscalculation and risk rise dramatically.

A final element is the weaponization of information, which we have seen being used increasingly and having powerful impact. This again increases the risk of escalation and mistake.

So, the environment now is extremely dangerous. People should understand and realize how much the dangers has increased since the end of Cold War. We see many cases of miscommunication and a lack of channels to solve them compared to the Cold War. While more countries have acquired nuclear weapons and the multilateral system has changed dynamics, de-escalation protocols and communication channels aren't in place between all these countries.

Against this backdrop, let me briefly talk about the NPT Review Conference in 2020.

I see a lot of concern about the conference and its outcome document. We are very much hoping that we can overcome the hurdles we faced in 2015 and we face today to achieve an ambitious outcome document. There are various hurdles, let me briefly mention two: One is the lack of implementation of obligations and commitments by the nuclear weapon states under Article VI, the 13 steps of 2000 and the action plan of 2010. The other is of course, is Middle East weapons of mass destruction free zone, for which we want to see progress.

Some of the supporters of nuclear weapons are trying to portray the TPNW as an obstacle. This is not the reality. The TPNW actually strengthens NPT. The NPT is a general, an outline document that contains the general principles, goals and obligations that need to be implemented through other multilateral agreements to be built upon it. In the areas of nuclear safety and peaceful use of nuclear energy, you see a lot of treaties created to implement the more general provisions of the NPT. On nuclear disarmament, Article VI is quite short. So some first steps were taken to implement it bilaterally. For example, the INF Treaty and the new Start Treaty in their preambles clearly state that they are implementing the obligations contained in Article VI of the NPT, so acknowledge nuclear weapon states' obligations on nuclear disarmament. This had not yet has happened in the multilateral field.

In fact the TPNW is the first multilateral instrument we have to implement the disarmament

provision of the NPT. It is clearly intended to implement Article 6 of NPT. Therefore you can see that messaging that the TPNW is an obstacle to the NPT or its outcome document is simply not correct.

Talking about the TPNW, I will also talk about Austria's position to lead to its adoption. This is where I come back to Austria's tradition, which comes back to a particular decision: In the early 70s Austria still had an unclear position on nuclear energy. We built a nuclear power plant. But what happened? A civil society mobilization started a huge campaign against using nuclear energy in Austria. The hugely costly power plant was never started up. The giant mobilization led to a people's referendum which closed the nuclear power plant once and for all. Eventually this campaign also led to the amendment to the Constitution which outlaws both use of nuclear energy and nuclear weapons in the territory of Austria. And by extension, working closely with international civil society and other countries, this kind of mobilization led to the work on the TPNW.

Just briefly, I think you are all aware we were inspired by testimonies of the Hibakusha and by reports by International Red Cross which let us consider how to reframe discussion on nuclear weapons, getting away from security narrative to a narrative focusing on individuals. To put security of individuals into the center of discussion. This is what happened in the humanitarian initiative on nuclear weapons. At the Conferences of Oslo, Nayarit and Vienna where we looked at both humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons with testimonies of Hibakusha, and also the incredibly high risks that nuclear weapons entail. We looked at everything from the reports of previously used nuclear weapons to risk calculations. The statistics show us that if you look at the risks, there is high chance we will see another nuclear explosion sooner than later.

Nuclear risks are unlike a car accident. Car accidents cause a lot of death. But you have to change a lot of individual driving habits and individual decision making which might be the cause. With nuclear weapons, only a couple of countries make decisions. Those couple of countries need to make changes, they need to remove the triggers and bid goodbye to nuclear annihilation once for all.

That's why we issued Austrian pledge that was later called the humanitarian pledge to which 127 countries signed up. We looked at the humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons, we considered that biological and chemical weapons are already prohibited because of their inhumane qualities and their indiscriminate nature, all shared by nuclear weapons have. In close cooperation with other countries and civil society, we then got a mandate for an open-ended working group on how to close the existing legal gap. It led to the negotiation of TPNW.

I think TPNW is important for many reasons. One of its reasons is very clear. Because security is not just that of nuclear weapon states, but that is for every single one of us, which changes the focus on individuals. And also allows for all voices to be heard whether they are nuclear weapon states or not. Of course, the TPNW is an important and historical step, but no one says that it eliminates nuclear weapons immediately. It contains two clear pathways towards nuclear disarmament inside and outside the treaty. It is deliberately crafted to be flexible to address the needs of the individual cases with

implementation details to be added once countries join it. The treaty now has 25 ratifications, so we are at the half-way point. On September 26th we will hold a high level ceremony at the margins of the UN General Assembly High-Level week, where we hope to get more signatures and ratifications. Progress is very swift, especially compared to other similar treaties. Austria also already offered to host the first meeting of states parties to the TPNW within one year from the entry into force of the treaty. But also we will do more groundwork on how to progress, how to establish a sort of the structure of the treaty and how to take forward the elimination of nuclear weapons.

We are excited to work with governments and civil society which keep pushing for the treaty. There are still countries which are working against the treaty. Quite often, these countries working against the treaty actually have not listened to population and civil society – they may not be in favor of nuclear weapons. It is important that we work together, to continue to communicate the danger of nuclear weapons. The risks can be outweighed and much sustainable security can be achieved without nuclear weapons. Thank you.