Conference on Disarmament
Statement Austria
13.8.

Mr. President,

Allow me first to congratulate you on the assumption of the Presidency. Austria pledges its full support during your presidency and within the P6.

Last week world leaders and people around the globe commemorated 75 years of the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Austria welcomes that four countries marked the commemoration by ratifying the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons bringing the number of ratifications to 44. The first hand accounts of survivors are a strong reminder why the international community has made the total elimination of nuclear weapons a priority from the first ever General Assembly Resolution onwards.

Nuclear radiation and blasts do not respect borders. The consequences last for generations. It is our shared interest to prevent the catastrophic humanitarian consequences from occurring. Yet, over the past years we have witnessed increased spending on nuclear weapons and delivery systems, the modernization of arsenals, the development of new types of nuclear warheads, and despite political commitments and legal obligations even an expansion of arsenals.

Mr. President,

Facing the challenges of our current times, the pandemic and its consequences provides an opportunity to rethink how we can improve our work. During the last weeks it was encouraging to see that most of the CD members have demonstrated flexibility with a view to restart the CD. There seems to be a wide-spread interest to enhance the contribution of this forum to improving international security. Equally we see a broadly shared desire to shift the focus towards substantial issues on our agenda rather than on bilateral issues on which the CD has no mandate. A renewed focus on substance might also encourage pragmatism.

Developments related to the topics on the CD’s agenda did not stop with the pandemic. It is within the responsibility of this forum and its members to strive towards agreements on the issues the international community has entrusted to the CD. As Austrian Foreign Minister Alexander Schallenberg stated on the 6.8.: “In times of heightened tension the responsibility to advance nuclear disarmament increases.” The CD would be well placed to contribute to this.
As the CD should strive to fulfil its role in the multilateral disarmament system, we could also improve on the effective use of resources. The impact of COVID-19 goes well beyond health. The backdrop of the emerging economic crisis could serve as an inspiration to improve effectiveness and efficiency of the CD.