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Pre-recorded statement by the Republic of Austria

delivered by
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Chairperson,

Austria is fully aligned with the statement delivered by the European Union and wishes to add the following remarks in a national capacity.

The challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic illustrated our interconnectedness and the limits of narrow security concepts. Human, economic and social vulnerabilities of our globalized world were all too apparent. We should use this opportunity to reassess our security analyses and refocus our efforts around human and common security in the interest of all.

In today’s complex geopolitical environment, disarmament efforts are even more important. Yet, despite the substantive health and economic challenges, global military spending continued to rise in 2020. We need to move away from the dangerous misconception, that security can only be ensured by military and armament. The pandemic should be a wake-up call to lead us to a broader understanding of security and to better integrate disarmament instruments and measures into all efforts to build and maintain security. As High Representative Izumi Nakamitsu reiterated on many occasions: precisely in challenging times like these - it is time for disarmament as it helps to increase security.

Most of the established disarmament machinery, suffered further serious setbacks during the pandemic. Austria is concerned about unilateral tendencies that challenge the disarmament regime, and about tendencies to use procedural manoeuvres to delay, undermine or even prevent substantive exchanges and productive work. In the light of global challenges, it is time to refocus on implementation and strengthening the regime. Austria remains convinced that it is in the vital security interest of all to strengthen our institutions, to stay firm on our established norms, to fully implement our treaty obligations and to continue to shape the future multilateral disarmament regime.

As we aim to rebuild better, it is important not to lose the achievements of past decades, such as more inclusive processes. Evidence shows that broader stakeholder involvement yields better results. We continue to experience limited formats in most of the disarmament machinery. It is important to recall the valuable contributions of
civil society and the perspectives of the next generation. We need to take concrete action to improve their participation in all processes – from First Committee to the NPT. Even before the pandemic gender equality remained a particular concern in disarmament and arms control fora – and unfortunately, this year’s First Committee has seen a backwards trend so far: In 2021 we should be able to enhance not only the meaningful participation of women, we should also consistently take, gender specific impacts of certain weapons into account.

We also need to ensure strong coordination and synergies across our workstreams. We should collect best practices and new opportunities that presented itself during these past two years in order to involve a wider range of actors and reduce our carbon footprint. We should also ensure to make maximum use of the regional offices across the continents, including the excellent office in Vienna, to ensure active exchange and coordination with relevant actors in our many workstreams.

Chairperson,

Austria is committed to work for a global, open, free, stable and secure cyberspace where international law, including respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms fully apply. This is crucial not only from a security perspective but also for social, political and economic development. In an interconnected world, effective multilateralism on these issues is key. The consensus reports of the UNGGE and the OEWG are encouraging signs of progress and a joint willingness to find global solutions. We welcome the resolution tabled jointly by the US and Russia, which endorses these reports. The reports provide important guidance for States in their use of ICTs and for our future work in this Committee and the new OEWG. We should now focus on the implementation of the agreed UN framework; therefore, Austria fully supports the proposal of a Programme of Action to Advance Responsible Behaviour in Cyberspace.

I thank you