

A New Agenda for Peace – AUSTRIA

Austria welcomes the initiative of the Secretary General to develop a ***New Agenda for Peace*** in close consultation with Member States, and in collaboration with all relevant partners, as part of the preparations for the Summit of the Future. The maintenance of peace and security is the core mandate of the United Nations. Austria strongly supports the call of the Secretary General for a new effort to agree on more collective security responses and a meaningful set of steps to manage emerging risks as set out in his report ***Our Common Agenda***. Austria therefore wishes to offer the following considerations for a ***New Agenda for Peace*** on (i) institutional questions and conflict prevention, (ii) strategic risks and (iii) the rule of law.

I. Institutional Considerations and Conflict Prevention

The report *Our Common Agenda* recognizes that the ‘world is moving closer to the brink of instability, where the risks we face are no longer managed effectively through the systems we have’. Austria therefore proposes an enhanced focus on **conflict prevention and peacebuilding**, as recognized in *Our Common Agenda*, and the following considerations on **institutional questions** of the peace and security architecture of the United Nations.

Partnerships of the United Nations in the context of peace and security

In a globalized world, peace and security lies in the responsibility of all. Recognizing the importance of **partnerships and cooperation between the United Nations and other international organisations**, in particular regional organisations, the *New Agenda for Peace* should acknowledge the necessity of strengthening regional prevention strategies. This could be achieved by conducting regular/annual high-level meetings convened by the United Nations Secretary-General bringing together leaders of international and regional organisations actively engaged in the areas of peace and security (‘multilateralism on a multilateral level’). Furthermore, highlighting the key proposal in the Secretary General’s report *Our Common Agenda* of boosting partnerships, and regarding the inherent need of the United Nations system of fostering these partnerships, this **proposed annual multilateral meeting** would underline the overall importance of ‘moving forward together’. Effective partnerships bring about synergies, increase efficiency and strengthen the United Nations in their core mission: to promote peace and security on a global level. In this context, the United Nations will surely benefit from a **stronger and more capable European Union** in security and defence as set out in the *Strategic Compass*. The European Union is working together with the United Nations in many areas and can do more to help reinforce, bridge, substitute or complement United Nations tasks and missions. Austria strongly supports the European Union in its efforts to enhance its strategic partnership with the United Nations on peace operations and crisis management, including with the implementation of the new joint set of priorities on peace operations and crisis management for 2022-2024.

Integration on All Levels and in All Areas

Supporting the overall goal of strengthening effective multilateralism, a **more coherent and transparent integration of efforts by the United Nations** is necessary on all levels and in all areas of peace and security in order to avoid duplications and administrative obstacles. This includes the level of United Nations headquarters, the United Nations Country Teams under the leadership of the Resident Coordinators and the United Nations system across the whole spectrum of conflict prevention, including the strengthening of the rule of law and human rights, humanitarian assistance, peacemaking and peacekeeping, peacebuilding and sustainable development.

System-wide coherence of the United Nations is necessary to work towards the common goal of building sustainable and lasting peace. In an increasingly complex world, where climate change, the lack of sustainable institutions and socio-economic factors are drivers of conflict, the United Nations peace and security pillar, including the Security Council, needs to be better integrated with other parts of the United Nations – particularly the Peacebuilding Commission and the United Nations specialized organizations and agencies. The peace and security system should also draw on the vast expertise of the United Nations system for **early warning and prevention** and thereby recognize the interconnectedness of climate and security, poverty, human rights as well as development and peace.

Conflict prevention and preparedness

Austria fully supports the **focus on prevention and preparedness** and recognizes the need for **sustainable financing** in this respect, including for peacebuilding. This area of work should feature prominently in the *New Agenda for Peace*. The United Nations must become better at building **regional and local level prevention strategies** and should thus integrate resilience and capacity building in its peace operations. The *New Agenda for Peace* is a key opportunity to highlight the need for stronger **partnerships** between the United Nations and regional organisations in the area of prevention, early warning and preparedness. Austria also considers it important that the *New Agenda for Peace* looks at the interdependence of conflict prevention, the rule of law, human rights, sustainable development and climate change. At the national level, Austria is increasing its efforts with respect to mediation and conflict prevention.

Active conflict prevention by the United Nations Secretary-General

The United Nations Secretary-General has a unique role and mandate in conflict prevention, and the capacity to mediate in arising and ongoing conflicts. With the aim of further strengthening the United Nations' capacity for conflict prevention and the position of the Secretary-General, the *New Agenda for Peace* should underline the important **role of the United Nations Secretary-General in conflict prevention** in the context of the United Nations system. Recognizing the existing challenges and evolving threats to peace and security, a system-wide approach is needed, including the integration of the triple nexus - peacekeeping, peacebuilding and sustainable development - as a comprehensive approach throughout the

whole conflict cycle. This would further reduce inefficiencies in the use of resources and seeks to foster sustained peace and security.

In the context of the Secretary General's role for conflict prevention and sustaining peace, **Article 99 of the Charter of the United Nations** has been neglected for too long. Austria encourages the Secretary-General to use the rights and powers conferred upon him by this article more often. It could also be considered that a **small group of experts** assist the Secretary-General in the implementation of Article 99.

The Role of the Security Council

As a staunch supporter of multilateralism and member of the Accountability, Coherence, Transparency Group (ACT Group), Austria has consistently advocated for a **more transparent, accountable and inclusive Security Council**. We are guided by the belief that the Security Council must better reflect the realities of the 21st century to address today's challenges. This entails a more **representative membership** - reflective of today's world and its diversity. It is crucial to ensure the full participation of small and medium-sized States in the work of the Security Council, which by their very nature have an immense interest in upholding international law, peace and security.

Austria also supports addressing the **use of the veto** – particularly when it is used to halt action against a member that violates fundamental principles of the United Nations Charter. We welcome the impact of the Veto Initiative - UNGA resolution 76/262 - on the work of the Security Council and continue to support the ACT Code of Conduct as well as the Political Declaration on Suspension of Veto Powers in Cases of Mass Atrocity initiated by France and Mexico.

II. Strategic Risks

The global security landscape has become more complex, volatile and fragmented. We are confronted with multiple threats to international security from terrorism, arms proliferation, organized crime to hybrid threats, cyberattacks and foreign information manipulation and interference. In his report *Our Common Agenda*, the Secretary-General has identified a vision for reducing strategic risks as one of the central elements of a *New Agenda for Peace*.

Triple planetary crisis, peace and security

The triple planetary crisis of climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution constitutes one of the most pressing issues for the future of humanity and our planet. As threat multipliers, they have severe consequences on our security. The **climate change and security nexus** has been subject to discussions of the Security Council and should constitute a key element of a *New Agenda for Peace* in order to ensure the systematic mainstreaming of climate and environmental issues into the regular work of the United Nations on peace and security.

Austria will continue to support efforts to address these issues both as an active proponent in the fight against climate change as well as in the peace and security context.

Cyber Security, Hybrid Threats

Geopolitical tensions are reflected in the **cyber- and information space** more frequently than ever before. In addition to state actors, cyber criminals are undermining economic development and prosperity as well as democratic institutions and processes. The Ad Hoc Committee negotiating a United Nations Convention on Cybercrime is currently working on an effective instrument in the global fight against cybercrime, building on the expertise of UNODC as the leading United Nations entity in addressing new and emerging forms of crime.

The *New Agenda for Peace* should aim at promoting **an international order in cyberspace based on international law**, consolidating peace and stability in cyberspace and advancing an open, free, global, stable and secure cyberspace in order to contribute to conflict prevention and greater stability in international relations. Strong emphasis should be placed on the application of **international law in cyberspace**, including international human rights law and international humanitarian law.

In the OSCE, work continues on the implementation of the 16 **confidence-building measures (CBMs) on cybersecurity**, which enables the OSCE to serve as a role model internationally. The *New Agenda for Peace* should support the development and the operationalisation of existing cyber CBMs at regional and international level.

Vision for disarmament

Austria considers a **strong and effective disarmament and non-proliferation regime** to be crucial for the advancement of human, national and collective security. This regime needs to be fair, non-discriminatory and based on broadly supported rules and principles that are respected because they are just and because they benefit all. Human, national and collective security should be seen as mutually reinforcing. Security approaches that are selective only lead to tensions and possible conflicts, fuel arms races and end up diminishing the common security of all.

A world free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction

Austria considers a **world free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction** to be a crucial shared objective to safeguard our common security and the security of future generations. The risks of nuclear conflict are higher today than in decades and are gravely exacerbated by irresponsible nuclear brinkmanship and nuclear threats. The absolute imperative of the taboo against the use of nuclear weapons must be strengthened. The fragility and precariousness of our international security system that includes nuclear weapons and the threat of mass destruction has been brought into sharp focus by recent events. New technologies add further layers of risk to nuclear weapons and nuclear

deterrence. It must be underlined that nuclear deterrence is not a dogma. It is a theory that is fraught with risks and uncertainties that humanity cannot allow to fail even once, given the devastating consequences of a nuclear conflict to all humanity. It is high time to challenge these assumptions and engage in a broad and inclusive dialogue of finding a way out of this precarious paradigm, which provides only an illusion of security.

Austria is convinced that the conclusion of the current geopolitical tensions and dangerous security situation must be to **redouble efforts towards nuclear disarmament**. The *New Agenda for Peace* should support these efforts. A re-emphasis on nuclear weapons would fuel nuclear arms races and further proliferation and must be prevented at all costs. In this vein, the **Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons** is an important contribution to the nuclear regime with its underlying arguments based on new evidence on the humanitarian consequences and risks associated with nuclear weapons, as well as its focus on addressing the impact and injustice on communities affected by nuclear weapons use and testing. These profound arguments should be weighed against the assumptions and high risks that nuclear weapons and the practice of nuclear deterrence bring to all humanity. The increasing international recognition that the consequences of the use of nuclear weapons would be too catastrophic and the risks associated with nuclear weapons too high can, thus, help to pave the way towards a world without nuclear weapons. Other treaties, instruments and organisations that have been established to control and eliminate these weapons, such as the NPT, the centrepiece of the nuclear regime, or the **CTBT and the IAEA, must be strengthened and supported against all attempts to undermine this regime**. The same goes for the treaties and organisations dealing with chemical and biological weapons and for the taboo against any use of these weapons of mass destruction.

Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems

In a first cross-regional “**Joint Statement on Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems**” delivered by Austria on 21 October 2022, seventy United Nations Member States during the UNGA First Committee debate emphasized the urgent need for the international community to further their understanding and address the risks and challenges related to autonomy in weapon systems. These States referred to the widely shared recognition that the **human element is and must remain central in the use of force**. In our view, the urgency expressed by the 70 States and many more participating in the debate, should be followed up through concrete action by the international community. The *New Agenda for Peace* should consider internationally agreed rules and limits, addressing the technological, legal, humanitarian, ethical and security aspects of autonomous weapons systems. Austria is of the view that an **international regulatory framework including legally binding provisions** is required to ensure that humans remain accountable for the use of force with regard to autonomy in weapon systems and supports all efforts in this regard.

Humanitarian disarmament and the protection of civilians

Humanitarian disarmament and the protection of civilians constitute long-standing foreign policy priorities for Austria. It is important that the international community upholds the existing international prohibitions and restrictions on conventional weapons and engages to further prevent or reduce the harm of civilians and take account of new developments and challenges. The adoption of the '*Political Declaration on strengthening the protection of civilians from the humanitarian consequences arising from the use of explosive weapons in populated areas*' (**EWIPA**) was a landmark achievement in this regard. We need to ensure that the commitments are translated into concrete action on the ground. In this context, Austria emphasises the need to strengthen further the growing norm on **assistance to survivors and victims of armed conflict and armed violence** in a non-discriminatory manner and gender-sensitive way and to ensure that the rights of survivors, affected families and communities are met. This is crucial also for the achievement of our development goals.

III. The Rule of Law, Organized Crime and Corruption

Respect for the Rule of Law, both at the national and the international level, as well as sustainable institutions are key components of conflict prevention, peacebuilding and sustaining peace. Austria therefore proposes the following elements for consideration.

Rule of Law

The Secretary General's *Our Common Agenda* underlines that justice and rule of law are essential dimensions of the social contract. Good governance and trustworthy institutions are key elements of the rule of law. They can prevent domestic conflicts from arising in the first place. Austria suggests that any future rule of law activities conducted by the United Nations in the framework of the *New Agenda for Peace* focus to a large extent on prevention. Exemplary rule of law assistance through the Global Focal Point for the Rule of Law in the area of prevention / sustaining peace currently makes a difference in 23 country situations.

As outlined in *Our Common Agenda*, costs of peacebuilding can be minimised significantly by timely investment in prevention. Many conflicts worldwide could be avoided by strict **compliance with international law**. There is an appalling disregard for the rules, a lack of compliance and implementation. Austria therefore suggests that the *New Agenda for Peace* should place particular attention on the prevention of breaches of international law and respect for the rule of law and look for ways to strengthen the **deterrent effect of international law**. This could include monitoring of country situations and documentations of violations of key principles of national and international law as well as supporting the development of systems of automaticity of reactions for breaches of international law. While determining the consequences of non-compliance and norm violations remains upon the international community, United Nations institutions can support international efforts when it comes to the **detection of obvious violations of international law** and supporting the victims of norm violators.

Organized crime

Organized crime undermines development, fuels conflicts, contributes to a supportive environment for terrorism, accelerates environmental degradation and increases inequalities and corruption. The fight against organized crime as well as efforts to mitigate its impact should be reflected in the *New Agenda for Peace* as important elements when seeking peace and security, human rights and sustainable development. To that end, it is key that the *New Agenda for Peace* takes into consideration the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime with its three protocols on human trafficking, migrant smuggling, and illicit firearms manufacturing and trafficking and its mandate. The **United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC)** as well as the **Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice (CCPCJ)** play an important role in the fight against organized crime and consequently need to be fully involved in all United Nations activities in these areas.

Corruption

Corruption **undermines the rule of law and the social and economic development of entire countries**. It often goes hand in hand with organized crime, as the existence of illegal businesses is likely to have a corrupting influence on governments, especially law enforcement and border control. On a larger scale, this constitutes a threat to global peace and security. Austria strongly supports preventing and combatting corruption in the framework of the United Nations Convention against Corruption and other international institutions such as the International Anti-Corruption Academy. The *New Agenda for Peace* should ensure that these institutions, mechanisms and instruments are strengthened and integrated into the comprehensive United Nations efforts to establish sustainable and lasting peace.