

Austria – Session 1 – Statement by Amb. Alexander Kmentt

Let me start by thanking Norway wholeheartedly for having taken the initiative of organizing this conference. Understanding the humanitarian consequences of NWs is an important component of any informed discourse on NWs. It is very encouraging that there is a growing interest in discussing this dimension as evidenced by a number of important developments in the past few years. The impressive participation in this conference is further evidence of this. This makes it even more regrettable that most of the states possessing NWs have chosen not to take part in this discussion. We can all draw our own conclusions as to why this is the case.

I would also like to thank the panelists for their interesting presentations that raise many important issues and questions. I would like to ask two specific questions related to the access of responders and to the provision of assistance in the case of a NW detonation.

- The pictures in our mind about NWs explosions are primarily Hiroshima and Nagasaki. However, the weapons used at that time would today be considered like smaller tactical NWs. Moreover, radiation was not understood at the time. In a detonation scenario where the known area of lethal and potentially harmful radiation would be large, is it even likely that responders would be available and prepared to go into this area. And if so, how would they have to be protected and how would they have to rotate? Would relief organizations even be allowed and/or prepared to put their staff into such a situation?
- The 2nd question related to the electromagnetic pulse (EMP) emanating from a NWs detonation. If we understand it correctly, the EMP depends on the high of the explosion and could impact an extremely large area up to several hundred kilometers. Given that modern medical equipment also depends to a considerable extent of electronic devices would that not mean that this equipment would likely become unusable in the EMP area? Would that not also apply to other equipment needed for any relief operation, such as transportation and heavy machinery, which would have to be brought into the area from afar?

I would appreciate if the panelists could address these questions.

Thank you