

Panel III: Preparedness and response

Statement Austrian Delegation – Mr. Bernhard Schneider Austrian Red Cross

Thank you Mr/Mdm Co-Chair,

I work for the Austrian Red Cross, a key humanitarian actor and emergency relief organization in Austria. The Austrian Red Cross takes part in this conference as member of the Austrian delegation to underscore the fact the humanitarian dimension of nuclear weapons is an issue of serious concern to the government and to Austrian Red Cross.

The acute threat perception of a nuclear weapon detonation in the Austrian public may have mostly disappeared but not too long ago, this was a very serious and acute issue in Austria.

During the Cold War, Warsaw Pact and NATO, included scenarios with NWs use in Austria in their military planning,

As a consequence of the threat of a nuclear war in Europe, Austria, for instance, established in the 1970s a national radiation early warning system, one of the first of its kind,;

After Chernobyl and the end of the cold war, public attention was increasingly drawn away from nuclear weapons and their continuing threat for humanity. Today, the focus of the discussion in Austria is more on radiological issues, including accidents in power plants.

Mr/Mdm Co-Chair;

The Austrian Red Cross was a co-sponsor of the Council of delegates resolution in 2011 on the humanitarian consequences of Nuclear weapons. Following up on this, we organized last November together with the Austrian Foreign Ministry a seminar on the humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons, bringing together all relevant stakeholders in Austria;

- We looked at several scenarios from the perspective of the Austrian Red Cross ability to provide humanitarian assistance. The scenarios, included a dirty bomb scenario, a nuclear weapons explosion in Munich in Southern Germany and one of a nuclear explosion in Vienna
- From the standpoint of an immediate response organisation, there are adequate plans to deal with a dirty bomb scenario and there are significant capabilities available to address some of the immediate impact of the south Germany scenario. Depending on the weather and wind conditions, large parts of Austria would receive significant radiation. This of course leaves out the consequences of dealing with

panic, refugee movements and economic consequences and did not look at capabilities of providing assistance to the victims in Germany.

- For the scenario of a nuclear explosion in Vienna, the conclusions from both, the Austrian Red Cross point of view and indeed also from the competent government institutions are very similar to many statements and conclusions which we have heard at this Conference yesterday and Our capacity to respond to such a nuclear emergency is not nearly adequate
- Critical medical infrastructure is located in Vienna that would likely be destroyed.
- A substantial part of all relief capabilities would be eliminated by a nuclear attack, thus further dramatically reducing our ability to assist the victims; : if the helpers themselves become victims, the other victims do not stand a chance;
- Effective help from abroad is unlikely due to the dangers of radiation or because they would be needed in their own countries;
- creating the enormous relief capacities which would be necessary to respond more adequately to a nuclear detonation anytime soon is not realistic

Austria has well-organized disaster response and civil protection structures. There are comprehensive plans in place for a variety of emergency scenarios, including nuclear power plant accidents and also for radiological events including a dirty-bomb scenario. However, there are no specific civil defense and response plans in place for a nuclear detonation scenario in Austria. Such an event would clearly be beyond the Austrian civil society relief capacities;

Therefore we fully agree with what has been said before: strengthening emergency preparedness, the resilience of society and our capacity to respond is very important; however, the only realistic way to address the threat posed by nuclear weapons is prevention, through the elimination of nuclear weapons.

thank you co-chair