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PERMANENT MISSION OF AUSTRIA
TO THE UNITED NATIONS

Statement by

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Republic of Austria**

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Check against delivery

Mr. President,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

When we **met in this hall last year**,

I was **cautiously optimistic**
that the world would **slowly but surely find its footing**
after the Covid-19 pandemic.

My call was to look forward and to focus on
strengthening our resilience and
on preserving the hard-earned development gains.

Little did we know then that **only one year later** we would find ourselves in
a **very different world**.

Facing another crisis with **tremendous global consequences**.
Consequences that **reach even beyond the pandemic**.

On February 24, war returned to Europe,
when Russia brutally attacked Ukraine –
an independent and sovereign country.

Russia is trying to **redraw borders using tanks and rockets,**
something the world hasn't seen since **Saddam Hussein's invasion**
of Kuwait.

It is using **explicit nuclear blackmail** and **fake “referenda”** in a clear
violation of international law.

This war of aggression against Ukraine **destroyed several illusions:**

- The illusion that the **security architecture** we had created
after the fall of the Iron Curtain would **continue to pay a peace**
dividend, guaranteeing stability and prosperity,
- That the **European peace project** would prevent war on our continent,
- And that crises and tensions **can and would ultimately be solved** by
peaceful means, through **dialogue and diplomacy.**

Russia's attack was like a **geopolitical ice-bucket** thrown at our face,
brutally tearing us from our **daydreams**
of a **post-historical, post-national Europe**.

Deep within us, we **clung to the belief that Francis Fukuyama**
might still be right with his **"End of History"**
– at least as far as our continent was concerned.

And we **trusted** that we had **learned our lessons**
after **two horrific world wars**,
after **half a century of a Cold War** and
an **Iron Curtain dividing** our continent.

Looking back, we have to **admit**
that we were perhaps **delusional, naïve – maybe even foolish**.

Indeed, our **"holiday from history" is over**.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Many in this room might think:

Why do **Europeans** make such a fuss and noise about it?

They might point to the fact, that **war and military conflict**
are an everyday reality in many parts of the world.

They might even **accuse us of applying double standards.**

That we only react so strongly to Russia's invasion,
because of **geographic and cultural proximity.**
or because **the Ukrainians "look like us"**.

I firmly reject such a narrative!

Let me be very clear:

- **This is a war in Europe, but it is not a European war.**

In fact, it is an **assault against the rules-based international order**, which we have established together over the past decades.

It is a **flagrant and deliberate breach of the founding Charter of this very organisation, of our United Nations.**

In this Charter, **every single state in this room** has committed to “**settle international disputes by peaceful means**” and “**to refrain from the threat of use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state**”.

And this breach has been committed not by any state but by a permanent member of the Security Council

– the **very organ** responsible for upholding the Charter and international peace and security.

This **puts into question the very foundations** of our security and stability.

All of a sudden, we find ourselves in a world in which
the **rule of law** risks being replaced
by the **law of the jungle**.

Such a world poses an **fundamental threat to us all**,
especially to smaller countries such as **Austria**.

Countries that **rely on international law as their shield**,
as their **protective cloak**
against unilateralism and the **use of force**.

I firmly believe
that the **ideas and principles laid down in the UN Charter**
are as **valid today as they were in 1945**.

In 1945, in his address to the **San Francisco Conference**, the **former US President Harry Truman** said – and I quote:

We can no longer permit any nation, or group of nations, to attempt to settle their arguments with bombs and bayonets.

If we continue to abide by such decisions, we will be forced to accept the fundamental concept of our enemies, namely, that “**Might makes right**”.

These words have **not lost their truth or validity.**

Are we really incapable of learning from history?

Because we are again **facing a country attempting to saustettle its neo-imperialistic score using “*bombs and bayonets*” and by targeting civilians and committing atrocities, that may amount to war crimes** under international humanitarian law.

And these “***bombs and bayonets***” are **not only targeting Ukrainians.**

They are **also targeting the world’s most vulnerable countries, pushing them into a triple crisis of shortages of food, energy and financing.**

And let me be very clear here: we should **not confuse cause and effect.**

We have to **put the responsibility firmly where it belongs.**

Some try to spread the **narrative** that this **triple crisis** of food, energy and financing

is somehow connected to the sanctions imposed by the European Union on Russia.

This is **simply wrong!**

To put it very clearly: There are **no EU-sanctions on the exports of grain, oilseeds or any other foodstuff, on fertilizers or on gas to third countries!**

Instead, the Russian Federation is **cynically using food and energy as a weapon.**

Pushing millions of vulnerable people around the world into poverty, hunger and debt.

According to the **UN Global Crisis Response Group**,
this triple crisis of energy, food and finance
now affects **1.7 billion people around the world.**

Not even the Soviet Union went that far.

Ladies and gentlemen,

We are living through an **era of transformation**.

With the Covid-19 **pandemic**,
the **global food and energy shortages**,
the soaring **cost of living**,
the rapid **technological change**,
the **climate change**
and the prospect of a **bumpy road ahead for the world economy**.

This is a **scary perspective**.

No wonder that our **citizens feel anxious and insecure**.

**A storm is brewing that will seriously affect millions of people.
Especially those most vulnerable.**

This is a **recipe for disaster**,
potentially **leading to mass migration**
and **social and political tensions**.

We rapidly have to take **countermeasures** –
not only nationally,
but in global solidarity.

This year, Austria is spending more on **development assistance and humanitarian aid** than ever before.

And next year we will **further increase** our **respective budgets**.

But we all know that **no government can shoulder** these challenges on its own.

We need a functioning multilateral system.

We need a rules-based international order with the UN at its core.

- Our **security depends** on **states respecting our sovereignty** and territorial **integrity**.
- Our **political stability rests** on the **principle of *pacta sunt servanda***.
- And our **economic prosperity requires** **functioning export markets** and **secure supply chains**.

**The war in Ukraine is not a conflict
of East versus West
or North versus South.**

**The dividing line runs between
the rule of law and
the law of the jungle.**

**International law is valid for every one –
no matter the geographical, religious or ethnic context!**

There is no first or second-class international law.

Civilians need to be protected,
whether in **Mariupol** or in the villages of **Yemen**.

Fundamental freedoms and human rights, especially the rights of
women and girls, have to be **respected**,
whether in **Crimea** or in **Kabul**.

Using hunger as a weapon is unacceptable,
whether by blocking **shipments out of Odessa**
or by preventing humanitarian **aid from reaching Tigray**.

There needs to be **accountability for war crimes**,
whether they happen in **Bucha** or in **Aleppo**.

I am proud that **Vienna is host** to the
UN Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine
and we will continue to **actively support the efforts** by the
International Criminal Court to shed light on the savage acts
committed in Ukraine.

Dear colleagues,

Effective multilateralism and respect for the rule of law
have been at the **core of Austria's foreign policy for decades.**

Symbolized by the UN Headquarter in Vienna.

And by our willingness to take on further responsibility
as a **candidate for the UN Security Council** at the elections in **2026.**

We count on your support.

Constructive dialogue and pragmatic diplomacy
will continue to be our **guide.**

It is **what Austria as an open and democratic society stands for.**

Ladies and gentlemen,

I believe we are facing the **most challenging time** of our political generation.

Our **actions today** will shape the **international system** of tomorrow.

A system that **rose out of the ashes of two horrible world wars** and the **end of the Cold War**.

I am not saying that it is perfect.
Far from it.

But, at least it is a system with which we are **striving to create a world** where the **rights of all people** and the **sovereignty of every nation** are respected,
where **peace, sustainability and social justice** are possible.

Obviously, these times are **heydays for doomsayers**.

And yet, I **remain confident** that we can **prevail**.

Why?

Because I **deeply believe** that our **societies** based on freedom, pluralism and individual rights are **remarkably resilient**
not despite, but because of our **vibrant political debates,**
opposing opinions, critical media and civil society.

They are the **key reasons** why we continue
to **innovate** and to **adapt**,
to **learn** from our mistakes,
to **rise** in the face of adversity.

I want my **children and grandchildren** to be able to grow up in a world
where **rules are applied and respected**,
where they can live their lives **in freedom and without fear**,
where might does not make right.

Yesterday's speech by the Russian president made obvious that **this conflict won't be over soon.**

But let us not give in to **fear, self-doubt and defeatism.**

Let us be **steadfast** and **ready to defend our values.**

Let us use these **turbulent times** to **lay the basis** for a more **just, equal and resilient future.**

Thank you.