

# AUSTRIA



PERMANENT MISSION OF AUSTRIA  
TO THE UNITED NATIONS

**Statement by**

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*Check against delivery*

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Mr. President,  
Excellencies,  
Ladies and gentlemen,

We are meeting in this hall today at a time that is undeniably one of the most challenging in recent history.

One look at the news and we see:

The highest number of violent conflicts since World War II,  
including a full-scale war of aggression by Russia against Ukraine.

An intensifying global climate crisis with extreme weather events  
causing devastation around the world.

Rising poverty, social divisions and a backsliding of human rights and  
development gains hard-earned over the last decades.

The world seems to be in a sad state of affairs and one wonders whether  
worse is yet to come.

We are indeed living in a time of uncertainty. In a “time between times”.

The old order is fading. And a new one is yet to emerge.

Sometimes I compare our current situation to an earthquake.

The entire earth is still shaking and the tectonic plates are moving.

We don't know yet where they will come to rest.

But we instinctively feel that the fault lines will be deeper and wider in the end.

We already see shifts and cracks in our trade systems, security systems, and  
multilateral systems.

No wonder that this leads to a sense of insecurity and unease.

To the feeling of living in a permanent state of emergency.

In this era of transformation, our citizens are rightly expecting answers.

I deeply believe that as politicians it is our responsibility to formulate hopeful, yet realistic visions.

This means looking at the world as it is, lucid and clear-headed, without rose-tinted glasses.

This also means that we have to be on our guard against those polarizing populists who spread fake news and offer seemingly easy answers to complex questions, who want us to believe that we can solve problems by simply negating them, by pulling up the drawbridge and decoupling from reality.

Be it on climate change, disruptive technologies like AI, mutual political and economic dependencies, or the growing multipolarity in geopolitics.

We cannot close our eyes to the complex realities of our modern world.

There are simply no silver bullets and quick fixes.

This would be another dangerous form of wishful thinking.

After all, we should know – especially in Europe – that wishful thinking is never a solid basis for policy.

This was painfully proven on February 24<sup>th</sup> last year, when Russia brutally invaded Ukraine.

For a country like Austria – militarily neutral, export-oriented, and at the heart of the European continent – the answer clearly lies in cooperation.

We understand that to deliver for our own citizens – to make their lives more secure, create economic opportunities and tackle global challenges – we need to work in partnership with others.

That is why we are deeply invested in multilateralism.

It is part of Austria's DNA.

Not least because Vienna is proud home to one of the UN Headquarters and over 50 international organizations.

We know that the rules-based international order is our only protective shield against a world where might makes right, where unilateralism and the use of force rule.

And frankly, nobody can deny that the rules-based international system, with all its imperfections, has served us all pretty well over the past eight decades:

Through a free and open global economy.

Through preventive diplomacy and peacekeeping, which have brought stability to our neighbourhood – an effort which Austrian blue helmets have been supporting since 1960.

And through a web of international treaties and agreements addressing such diverse issues as disarmament or climate change.

But we must ask ourselves honestly: is the multilateral system still fit for purpose? Can it last for another 80 years?

The answer is simple and sobering: No!  
We need to reform in order to preserve.

Because what we are seeing, and what I am hearing loudly in this hall, is that the rules-based international order is not inclusive enough.

The Security Council no longer reflects today's world.

It needs to offer a seat to more countries left out at the time of its establishment, including from Africa.

Austria will continue to push for reform.

Including in our candidature for a non-permanent seat at elections in 2026.

The multilateral system is not proactive and effective enough.

It has made little impact in places like Afghanistan, where women are systematically denied their most basic rights to education and to participate in public life, the Sahel region, where a series of coups d'état serve only the generals, not the citizens, and it has not been able to stop Russia, a P5, from invading its sovereign neighbour Ukraine in a fit of neo-imperialist aggression.

Ladies and gentlemen,

What I am talking about is enlightened self-interest.

I stand here today representing a smaller country with a great history.

A country that after the First World War shrank from an empire with over 50 million inhabitants to a state of less than 10 million people today and a fraction of its former territory.

And yet, where do we stand today?

Today, Austria is a flourishing country with a high degree of social stability, economic prosperity and environmental protection, with its capital Vienna being voted again and again as the world's most liveable city.

I believe there is a message here for those countries and leaders, who want turn back the clock, and who abuse history as a pretext to justify their violence today.

They are on the wrong track!

You cannot build a future while being stuck in the past!

We Austrians learned from our history.

It is precisely these experiences of the past that make us care so strongly about multilateralism.

There is simply no better alternative for safeguarding our prosperity and security and for tackling global challenges.

That is why we are deeply invested in our partnerships:

With our friends and neighbours in Europe and the European Union, within organizations like the UN and the OSCE, and with our Strategic Partners around the globe.

We have also increased our outreach to the Asia-Pacific region and we are engaging with African partners in the spirit of mutual respect and common interests.

Dear colleagues,

In the beginning, I said that we should look at the world as it is.

And the bitter fact is: we are more divided than ever.

All too often, even in this hall, we talk at rather than with each other.

We speak rather than listen.

So today, I would like us all to remember for what this hall was built:

As a space for real dialogue, not as an echo chamber or a club of like-minded.

As a place where we advocate for our principles and values, without denying other points of view.

Where, yes, we have heated debates and hard negotiations. But where, in the end, we reach a compromise.

Let me be very clear: I am not championing nihilism or moral reductionism.

We know exactly where we stand.

And Austria will always speak out for the values and principles that we hold dear, proudly and resolutely.

Because I am deeply convinced that our societies based on freedom, pluralism and individual rights are the best guarantee for our citizens' security and prosperity.

But at the same time, I categorically reject the notion of "you are either with us or against us".

The idea of "cancelling" whole societies or cultures.

Of reverting to moralizing, finger pointing or self-righteousness.

This is a lesson that we Europeans also have to learn.

Let's not kid ourselves: The world is not black or white.  
It is simply not that easy.

To me, this is not responsible statecraft.

It might play well with the social media bubble.

But it does not reflect reality.

And it will only strengthen the fringes of our societies, not the center.

That is why Austria will continue to be a champion of sensible and pragmatic multilateralism as we adapt, innovate and recalibrate our international cooperation.

All of this will require endurance, strategic patience and a healthy dose of realism.

But if we succeed, all of us will be better off.

We will emerge from this era of transformation stronger, more prosperous and more resilient.

Thank you.