

AUSTRIA



PERMANENT MISSION OF AUSTRIA
TO THE UNITED NATIONS

Statement by

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Republic of Austria**

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Mr. President,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

When we met in this hall last year, many— including myself — referred to the challenging times we were facing.

A world riddled with uncertainty, growing divisions and rising insecurity.

A backsliding in hard-earned development goals
and a backlash against the universality of human rights.

Looking back on the past year, we must admit that
the sense of being in a permanent state of emergency
has not decreased.

On the contrary. It has deepened.

Russia relentlessly pursues its full-scale war of aggression against Ukraine.

A violation of the UN Charter, of the most basic rules that we have set
ourselves, that continues to shock.

My country, Austria, is a militarily neutral country.

But neutrality does not mean, and never meant, indifference.

We know very well that a world in which Russia succeeds in shifting borders
with tanks and rockets is a world more dangerous to all of us.

After 946 days of unspeakable human suffering and destruction, it is high time
to return to diplomacy.

Nobody wants, nobody deserves, peace more than the citizens of Ukraine.

But a negotiated peace, not a dictate from Moscow.

And my friends, I am encouraged by my conversations
with many partners in this room, some far beyond Europe's borders.

Encouraged that no matter where we stand geographically, politically or
ideologically,
we can agree on the most basic principles of international law enshrined
in the UN Charter.

They should be the bedrock of any negotiation leading to a
comprehensive, just and lasting peace in Ukraine.

And let me be very clear: there cannot be any negotiations about Ukraine
without Ukraine.

In the Middle East, the barbaric terror attack of Hamas against Israel
has brought a new dimension of devastation to a region not lacking in
violence:

Israelis are traumatized by the slaughter, torture and sexual violence of
October 7th.

Hostages are still held captive by terrorists, including an Austrian father
of two.

And Palestinians in Gaza are facing starvation and disease in what can
only be called a humanitarian tragedy.

All this is heart breaking.

International humanitarian law is non-negotiable.
It applies all the time, everywhere.
The protection of civilians is paramount.

We need a ceasefire to get the hostages out and more humanitarian aid in.

And we need it now!

What we definitely don't need is any side adding fuel to the fire.

It is wishful thinking to believe that a full-scale escalation between Israel and Hezbollah could be controlled.

The result would be a firestorm engulfing the entire region and beyond. Everyone would lose.

I still believe that there are enough reasonable voices in the region wanting to work towards a political solution.

A solution enabling us to continue the normalization between Israel and the Arab world.

And to finally realize the two state solution allowing Israelis and Palestinians to live side by side in peace and security.

Other crises are equally disastrous, but get little public spotlight:

In Sudan, famine looms for millions of people, but the generals care more about power than about their own people.

While in Haiti, stabilization is slow to come after a total collapse of the state.

Amidst all this, humanity itself is facing fundamental questions with accelerating climate change, environmental disasters and the rise of artificial intelligence.

Dear colleagues,

There is no sugar coating it:

We are living in times of uncertainty,

compounded by rising political, economic and ideological tensions.

We see these shifts and cracks –

bilaterally, regionally and at the multilateral level.

I recently came across a statement that is simple but true:

In the past, we believed that we knew our own future.

Well, this bubble of wishful-thinking has burst once and for all.

The pendulum is swinging from global integration towards global fragmentation.

Isolationism, protectionism and nationalism are growing.

A zero-sum mentality is spreading.

Tempting us to divide countries and partners into categories of “either you are with us or against us”.

Or even into ghosting or cancelling others.

As if foreign policy worked like social media.

Around the globe, there are whole legions of doomsday prophets,

forces at the fringes of the political spectrum capitalizing on people’s anxieties and doubts.

Their business model is quick fixes and apparent easy answers.

Their agenda is sowing discord.

Austria is no exception.

Coming Sunday, we will have parliamentary elections

And also in my country some political forces are offering tempting but false solutions.

Even deliberately echoing the narratives of those forces

which are trying to weaken our open and pluralistic societies and

which are working against a strong and united Europe.

To counter this, we need a strong centre.

We need to keep our nerves and stay on message.

We need to make sure that this

new era of anxiety does not become an era of fear.

Ladies and gentlemen.

We all know that fear is a poor guide, especially in politics.

Yes, our global order is changing.

And yes, the world has become more complex,

some would say more frightening.

But I am deeply convinced that we have to stand up and defend the rules-based international order with all the means at our disposal!

We must not be afraid from taking a clear stance!

It is worth being defended!

Because it is and remains the best guarantee for our security, stability and prosperity.

Countries like Austria are dependent this system

A system

that respects international law,

that honours the principle of *pacta sunt servanda*.

A system where might does not make right.

And it is an illusion to believe that there is something to be gained from demolishing the rules-based international order.

If we lose it, everybody will lose in the end!

I am not denying that we are in the midst of a systemic rivalry.

Where some actors consider open and democratic societies

as not only a challenge, but even as a threat.

However, in the face of the turmoil and upheaval of the past few years,
societies based on freedom, pluralism and individual rights have proven
themselves stronger, more flexible and resilient than we ourselves
expected.

What we need most in this moment is trust and confidence.

Trust in our own capacities,
in our own principles.

So my appeal today is very clear:

Let us be more confident in our own strength.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Austria will always be ready to defend its own interests, values and principles.

At the same time, we will also have the courage

to look for the middle ground,

to find a compromise.

Because we all know that defending our multilateral system

means reforming it.

Our system of global governance is not delivering anymore,

it is not inclusive enough.

The Security Council as it stands now reflects a world that is long gone.

It is unacceptable that we are held hostage so easily by the will of a
handful of countries.

We commit ourselves to making the Council more effective, inclusive and
accountable,

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

Austria will continue to champion

a sensible and pragmatic multilateralism

based on our genuine will for cooperation and for dialogue.

Despite the current fragmentation of the global order,

our world will remain interdependent.

We will not be able to raise the drawbridges and decouple,

as some want us to believe.

This is magical thinking.

We need to face the challenges and complexities of our times head-on and together.

With a healthy dose of realism and more confidence in our own strength.

I thank you.