

Austria reaffirms its commitment to A/RES/60/1 in strengthening the security and stability of the Middle East and South Caucasus regions through active international involvement, regional cooperation, and bilateral and multilateral agreements. We acknowledge the Security Council as the primary international body responsible for the maintenance of peace and security under Article 24 of the Charter of the United Nations. We stress the importance of establishing sustainable development and equitable economic stability in the South Caucasus and the Middle East regions, highlighting the Austrian Development Cooperation in its assistance to these areas in the areas of poverty reduction and capacity building through strengthening education, environment-friendly energy, legal reform, and women's rights. Recognizing the many diverse ethnicities in the South Caucasus region, Austria stresses the need for regional dialogue and cooperation in strengthening non-violent conflict resolution and the maintenance of peacekeeping operations, as noted in A/RES/63/138 and A/64/573. We draw attention to the Austrian Study Center for Peace and Conflict Resolution efforts in developing programs focused on crisis prevention in South Caucasus through seminars for non-governmental organizations and parliamentary representatives in Georgia with future seminars on peace building and conflict transformation planned for Armenia and Azerbaijan. Realizing that border control remains an integral part of maintaining security and combating international terrorism, Austria encourages increased cooperation among Southern Caucasus States to strengthen best practices for border maintenance. Austria supports programs such as the Transitional Institutional Support Programme through the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe Mission in Georgia to help improve border management and border agency cooperation in South Caucasus and urges Member States to take similar actions. We condemn the acts of violence against civilians in the Gaza region and call for the full implementation of S/RES/1860. Recalling A/RES/64/11, we stress the need for improved border maintenance between Afghanistan and Pakistan with the assistance of International Security Assistance Force, and urge bilateral cooperation for border security, concentrating on disrupting the flow of narcotics and terrorists. Cognizant of Article 1 of the Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), maintaining human rights is central to Austria's foreign policy and we encourage Member States to consider human rights paramount in their own foreign policies. We deplore the ongoing violence against civilians in all regions of the world and remind States of their ethical responsibility to uphold human rights to all persons compliant with A/RES/63/180. Austria is devoted to nuclear non-proliferation and global disarmament and supports A/RES/64/26 for the establishment of a nuclear weapons free zone in the Middle East. Having adopted the Non-Proliferation Treaty and the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, we encourage all Member States to work within International Atomic Energy Agency oversight and safeguards. Serving as the Immediate Central Contact for The Hague Code of Conduct against Ballistic Missile Proliferation, Austria reinforces our commitment to international disarmament. In agreement with S/RES/1624, we condemn all acts of international terrorism and support the International Convention for the Suppression of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism and S/RES/1373. Austria endorses the International Convention for the Suppression of the Financing of Terrorism and urges Member States to ratify all twelve UN conventions against terrorism. Fully aware of Articles 3 and 14 of the UDHR and the International Convention Against the Taking of Hostages, we condemn hostage-taking and remind Member States that hostage-taking is a war crime established by the International Criminal Court under the Rome Statute. Pursuant to A/RES/61/172, we criticize Palestinian hostage-taking by Israel in the Gaza Strip and emphasize the need for Israel to cease all illegitimate actions in the region and east Jerusalem, under the auspices of A/RES/64/94. Austria draws attention to the Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy in combating terrorism at the national, regional, and international levels. Guided by A/RES/46/51, we abhor terrorist actions in the name of self-determination in Southern Caucasus and we encourage regional dialogue between States and separatist groups in the area for finding a peaceful solution. We applaud the efforts of Afghanistan and Pakistan in fighting terrorism within their borders but note that more must be done in order to eradicate the threat of terrorism from these regions and encourage tighter restrictions to further prevent terrorists from movement, obtaining weapons, and receiving financial aid, as called for in S/RES/1904. In accordance with A/RES/64/68, we support dialogue between States and non-state actors concerning self-determination. Observing A/RES/64/16, we recognize the self-determination of the Palestinian people and stress the need for Israel and the Palestinian National Authority to resume negotiations on a two-state solution. Bearing in mind Goal 7 of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), we note the correlation between poverty, scarcity of natural resources, and violence due to competition over those resources and recommend the creation of regional, national, and local programs for the management of natural resources, as reported in E/CN.17/2008/4. We urge Israel not to exploit, damage, or deplete any natural resource, especially water, from the Palestinians, under A/RES/60/183. Austria promotes the UN Food and Agriculture Organization's (FAO) water program, The Water Development and Management Unit, in the creation, research, and implementation of best practices regarding water management and urges Member States to send financial aid to FAO. Austria is dedicated to attaining sustainable security and peace in the Middle East and South Caucasus through regional, bilateral, and international collaboration in order to achieve the MDGs by 2015 and equitable human rights declared by the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.