CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Vienna Conference on the Humanitarian Impact of Nuclear Weapons
Discussion / General Debate
Vienna, 9 December 2014
Georg Sparber, Deputy Head of Mission

Chairperson,

I would like to thank and congratulate the Government of Austria for convening the third Conference on the Humanitarian Impact of Nuclear Weapons. You have sustained and further invigorated the momentum created by the past two conferences in Oslo and Nayarit, which addressed this pressing issue.

Undeniably, nuclear weapons cannot be the guarantors of global peace and security. They are a risk to humanity’s survival and long-term development, pose a grave danger for our health and environment, and stand in direct opposition to the basic principles of international law. Therefore, Liechtenstein is pleased to be here and voice its strong support for your initiative.

Ever since the scientists split the first atom our society has continued to chart course toward its destruction. We poured tremendous resources and human capital into the production of weapons of immense power, yet we failed to fathom the devastating and far-reaching consequences of their use. A single nuclear attack could inflict millions of innocent human casualties and create immeasurable suffering. Its impact cannot be contained within a single area or a country. Therefore, the use of nuclear weapons is a serious violation of international humanitarian law and our basic human values.

We also know that the use of nuclear weapons would significantly alter our living environment and have negative health consequences on generations to follow. Radioactive contamination, famine and epidemic disease would become the new normal. Every country, regardless of size and location, would suffer as a result. We must avoid this scenario. Let us instead recommit to the principles enshrined in the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and actively participate in producing a successful outcome at next year’s NPT Review Conference.

While the risk of nuclear weapons falling into the hands of terrorists is ever-present, the international mechanisms to deter their use are ever stronger. Article 8, section 2b (4), of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court notes that “intentionally launching an attack in the knowledge that such attack will cause incidental loss of life or injury to civilians or damage to civilian objects or widespread, long-term and severe damage to the natural environment which would be clearly excessive in relation to the concrete and direct overall military advantage anticipated” is a war crime. Those who consider inflicting great misery must know the world would not look away.

Chairperson,

We commend you for adding a sense of urgency by organizing this conference. You have shed light on the humanitarian cost of nuclear weapons, and introduced us to multiple outcomes that can result from their use and development. It is now up to us to work together to ensure that our exchange of ideas is translated into concrete actions and to avoid the worst possible outcomes.

Thank you.