Foreign and European Policy Report

2014

Report by the Federal Minister for Europe, Integration and Foreign Affairs
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FOREIGN AND EUROPEAN
POLICY REPORT
2014

Report by the Federal Minister for Europe, Integration and Foreign Affairs
With the entry into force of the amendment to the Federal Ministries Act 2014 on 1 March 2014, the Foreign Ministry was renamed Federal Ministry for Europe, Integration and Foreign Affairs as its scope of responsibilities within the Federal Government was expanded to include integration matters. For reasons of enhanced readability, either Ministry for Foreign Affairs (MFA) or Foreign Ministry are used in the English language edition of the Foreign Policy Report.
The events of 2014 once again clearly demonstrated the extent to which a country like Austria, with its geographical location and size, is dependent on foreign policy factors and how much the latter may influence our daily lives. The Ukraine-Russia crisis and the necessary sanctions against Russia hit our economy, the terrorist activities by the so-called Islamic State (ISIL/Da’esh) have confronted us all with new challenges, not only in terms of external relations but also within our societies, and the ongoing bloody conflict in Syria and Iraq as well as the crisis in Libya have led to a constant increase in the flows of refugees heading for Europe.

These few examples alone serve to show how irrelevant the differentiation between domestic and foreign affairs has become in today’s inter-connected world, how much events beyond our national borders and outside of Europe immediately impact our security, our economy, and our open society.

Thus foreign policy concerns us all. It requires flexibility and immediate responses to current developments and crises. In 2014, the Foreign Ministry with its approximately 1,200 staff at home and at its 100 representations abroad therefore again undertook huge efforts in representing Austria’s interests and assisting our citizens abroad. The fact that the quality of the services provided remains at a consistently high level despite increasing budgetary constraints, and that the personal commitment of many employees often goes far beyond any purely professional requirements deserves our particular respect and recognition.

Although it is necessary to react and adapt quickly to new developments in the world, it is, however, essential not to lose sight of long-term Austrian interests and priorities and to remain focused on the overarching goals of foreign and European policy.

1. Rapprochement of the Western Balkan countries with the European Union

My first visit abroad as Foreign Minister to Croatia and subsequent visits to Serbia, Kosovo, Albania as well as Bosnia and Herzegovina, underlined how significant this region is for Austria from a security policy, economic and cultural point of view. Thus full integration of the Western Balkans in the EU in
order to enable the permanent political and economic stabilisation of South East Europe has been and remains our goal.

In pursuing this objective, we have therefore continued to further develop the Western Balkans focus within Austrian foreign and European policy. On the **bilateral level**, the Austrian Development Agency’s (ADA) budget line for the Western Balkans was doubled, the personnel contributed to missions in Bosnia and Herzegovina as well as in Kosovo were increased, the embassies’ budgets for local cultural activities was increased by 30 %. **Measures taken at EU level** include, for instance, our support for opening EU accession negotiations with Serbia and the successful Austrian initiative in favour of recognising Albania as an EU candidate country, which was co-signed by 16 EU foreign ministers. Following social protests in Bosnia and Herzegovina in February, we were able to move the country back onto the EU agenda. In the context of a conference on strengthening civil societies, which we hosted in Vienna in September, it was possible to develop a very concrete support programme for citizens’ fora.

Austria also used its **chairmanship of the Council of Europe** and its **presidency of the Central European Initiative** to reaffirm the region’s European perspective at a summit involving ten foreign ministers from the region, held in Vienna at the beginning of June. In 2014, our proposal to host the next Western Balkans summit under the **Berlin Process** in Vienna was also successful.

**2. Europe and its Neighbourhood Policy**

20 years of **European Union membership** have had a major influence on Austria’s foreign and European policy. It opened up new opportunities to exercise influence both within and outside of Europe. Austria has so far been very successful in mobilising European partners for its interests. This will, however, continue to require joint, integrated and active efforts by all Austrian players. Assuming coordinating functions within the Austrian Federal Government, the MFA thus acts as a central interface in this context.

Against the background of the crises in the South and East of Europe, and in particular the **Ukraine-Russia conflict**, it has again become very evident how important EU membership is for Austria’s safety, security and prosperity. Despite existing internal differences of opinion, the EU succeeded in mediating between the parties to the conflict and in developing a united response with respect to the illegal annexation of the Crimea and to the violent separatist movements in the East and the South East of Ukraine.

Notwithstanding its clear rejection of the actions taken by Russia, Austria has always supported an approach that does not force our neighbours in Eastern Europe and in the South Caucasus to opt for “either Europe or Russia”. We rather advocate a policy of “as well as”, providing these countries with the opportunity of rapprochement with the EU while at the same time
maintaining sustainable relations with Russia. In this spirit, we also contribute actively to the reform of the European Neighbourhood Policy, which should be in a position to react in a more flexible and effective manner to the different needs and challenges in our immediate neighbourhood.

In the light of the important role Europe plays for us, it should be a particular concern of ours to assure that the EU does not come to a standstill but continues to develop. The impetus given by the United Kingdom towards further developing the EU provides an opportunity for a broader-based discussion on the future and reform of the Union. It should be used to enhance the attractiveness of Europe, to promote subsidiarity, to bring the EU closer to its citizens, and to further refine individual aspects relating to freedom of settlement in Europe in order to avoid imposing unequal burdens on national social security systems.

Our efforts aimed at stability and security in our neighbourhood are, however, not limited to the EU. We very consciously use all available fora, and contribute actively, for example, to the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine. As chair of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe, Austria succeeded in May 2014 – for the first time since the Maidan events – in bringing together the foreign ministers of Russia and Ukraine in Vienna and thus contributed to de-escalation. We will also use our forthcoming chairmanship of the OSCE in 2017, to which we were elected in December 2014, to contribute to further enhancing the European security architecture for the future.

### 3. Dialogue among Religions and Integration

A special hallmark of Austrian foreign policy is its strong commitment to fostering dialogue among religions and cultures. From this perspective, the topic of integration of persons with migration background, which was added to the MFA’s scope of activities, opens up valuable new opportunities.

In May, for instance, we launched a joint dialogue process on the topic of religious freedom involving the 16 recognised Churches and religious communities in Austria. The first meeting of this inter-religious platform for dialogue dealt with the issue of strengthening religious freedom and opportunities for Austria to make a contribution as a builder of bridges between religious and faith communities.

A highlight of the findings produced by this dialogue is the recast of the Islam Law, which entered into force on 31 March 2015. It ensures legal certainty with respect to the relation between state and religion and contains new rights as well as clear obligations for the Islamic religious communities. The law and especially the promotion of Islam of a European notion by preventing interference from abroad have attracted considerable international attention and triggered a discussion on the place of Islam in public life.
In Austria, the discussion on this law was overshadowed by the alarming emergence of the jihadist terrorist organisation ISIL/Da’esh in Syria, in Iraq and in Libya, which highjacks the Islamic religion in the name of cynical power politics and cruel repression. The violence exercised by this terrorist organisation not only triggers dramatic flows of refugees in the whole region, but by its aggressive use of social networks and the recruitment of young people from the whole of Europe it contributes directly to the radicalisation of our societies.

In the fight against ISIL terrorism, Austria has taken a very clear stance. We have not only launched comprehensive measures to counter radicalisation and combat recruitment for terrorism by inter alia intensifying preventive and awareness-raising activities, but also immediately joined the international alliance against ISIL/Da’esh established by the USA.

4. Venue for Dialogue and Seat of International Organisations

Austria has a long tradition as a venue for dialogue, which is clearly reflected by the presence of the UN and some 40 international organisations and institutions which have chosen Austria as their seat or headquarters. Their presence not only provides us with unique opportunities at foreign policy level, but is at the same time an important driver for the domestic economy: the Vienna-based entities generate an annual positive net effect in excess of 500 million euros for Austria, directly or indirectly securing around 10,000 jobs, and furthermore enhance Vienna’s attractiveness as a business location and a conference tourism destination.

However, this outstanding role enjoyed by Austria should by no means be taken for granted. Austria finds itself increasingly competing with a growing number of international locations within and outside of Europe that not only strive to attract new organisational entities but even seek to lure away organisations that are based in Austria.

We therefore have to undertake constant efforts towards guaranteeing the competitiveness of Vienna as a vibrant international hub. It is thus all the more positive that we not only succeeded in ensuring that the promising initiative “Sustainable Energy for All” (SE4All) remains in Vienna but also that the E3/EU+3 nuclear negotiations with Iran were again held in Vienna in 2014–2015. The breakthrough reached under the historic Vienna Nuclear Agreement aims at ensuring that Iran will not be able to build a nuclear bomb. It is not only an opportunity for greater stability and security but at the same time shifted Austria as the host country into the limelight of international attention.

In 2014, we were furthermore able to use Vienna’s position as seat of international organisations to strengthen our leading role in promoting nuclear disarmament. Since the Vienna Conference on the Humanitarian Impact of Nuclear Weapons in December 2014, Austria has led a humanitarian initia-
tive involving 159 states that pushes for the abolition of nuclear weapons as the most lethal threat to humanity. Austria will continue to consistently pursue this initiative and its efforts directed against a new nuclear arms race.

5. Service Centre for Austrians

Again in 2014, the Citizens’ Desk, whose scope covers the provision of consular services and measures to protect Austrians in the event of crisis or disaster, proved to be a growth area within the Foreign Ministry. The figures speak for themselves: the Citizens’ Desk section on the Foreign Ministry’s website was accessed more than 3.8 million times, 13,061 Austrians called the number set up for consular emergency cases and received support from MFA staff. Consular assistance was provided in a total of 576,543 cases, which marks a 21% increase compared with the previous year, translating into some 2,400 cases handled per working day. The services thus provided range from repatriating a female Austrian from Dubai who was threatened with arrest after having filed charges for rape, helping another female Austrian who faced capital punishment in Indonesia, to supporting people affected by the fire that broke out on a ferry in Greece.

The MFA also constantly seeks to modernise and update the services it provides to Austrian citizens. New cooperation agreements with the travel and tourism industry, for instance, facilitated travel registration for Austrians taking trips abroad. In the field of services provided online by the Citizens’ Desk – which registered a 30% increase last year – the option of “mobile phone signature” can now be used in a larger number of countries by Austrians abroad.

The expansion of the range of services made available by the MFA and the modernisation and further opening of the Ministry stood also in the centre of internal reforms launched within the MFA in 2014.

As a first step, a new staff unit for strategy and policy planning was established. Coupled with a more strategic foreign policy focus, a policy of opening the MFA towards new ideas, skills and competences was launched. Under this concept, the MFA has thus held regular public discussions and advisory meetings with experts on topical issues and priorities since 2014.

In a next step, the first comprehensive reform of the MFA’s structure and of admission procedures for the diplomatic service was launched. The MFA’s new organisational structure better reflects long-term priorities such as Europe, the Western Balkans and services.

An innovative element under this reform is the further expansion of services provided by the MFA to Austria’s export industry, with the establishment of the “BMEIA Unternehmensservice” (MFA Business Support Service Unit) as a central contact for Austrian companies. In 2014, this new unit was already able to assist more than 300 companies. Performing a total of some 1,500 activities, it thus provided relevant information, contacts and organisational
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assistance to Austrian industry. Closer interlinking of domestic and foreign policy interests is indeed pivotal for an export-oriented country such as Austria, enabling it to compete even more successfully at international level.

Another step to be taken is the re-orientation of the representation network, which will strengthen Austria’s presence in the Eastern European neighbourhood and the South Caucasus as well as in international growth markets and centres of innovation over the next few years.

Some of these reforms will develop their positive effects only over time. The openness to changes and the support provided by the MFA’s staff were essential to putting these reforms into practice and thus to enabling the Ministry to deal effectively with new developments and challenges. Let me take this opportunity and thank all staff of the “Team – Foreign Ministry” most warmly for their efforts, their dedicated commitment and enthusiasm in working for Austria at home and abroad.

Vienna, in July 2015

Sebastian Kurz
Federal Minister for Europe, Integration and Foreign Affairs
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1. Worldwide at Your Service – Services provided by the MFA to Austrians abroad

1.1. Worldwide at Your Service: Services the MFA provided worldwide to Austrians abroad in 2014

1.1.1. Crisis Prevention and Crisis Management

The year was marked by crises and disasters abroad: The Ebola epidemic ravaging in Liberia, Guinea and Sierra Leone continued to spread. While at the beginning it had largely gone unnoticed by the international community, it had reached almost uncontrollable levels by late summer and the epidemic threatened to spread to further countries. It was therefore imperative that humanitarian and healthcare-related measures be taken both at international and European level. All relevant activities were closely coordinated with the relevant authorities in Austria. In order to ensure repatriation of infected or ill Austrian medical and support staff who were active in the region, the EU decided at the General Affairs Council of 20 October to establish a pool for medical emergency evacuations, as numerous countries – including Austria – did not have specific resources available for the medical evacuation of Ebola cases. Fortunately, however it did not prove necessary to make use of this mechanism for Austrians.

Austrians were in some cases indirectly affected by political crises abroad and relevant support was provided by the representation authorities. In January, for instance, when Thailand declared a state of emergency, numerous tourists were staying in the country. In February, there were violent clashes in Venezuela, and the armed conflict in the east of Ukraine increasingly escalated over the course of the year. Ongoing civil wars in Syria and Libya, the attacks by Islamist terrorist organisations in Iraq and conflicts in the Gaza Strip in the summer months required the provision of support services and the introduction of protective measures for Austrians and their close family members. On 29 July, the Tripoli embassy was relocated to Tunisia. On 27 September, it became necessary to issue an alert regarding the worldwide threat of terrorism.

Austrian nationals were also affected by natural disasters. In October, mountaineers climbing in Nepal had to be rescued due to heavy thunderstorms. Following the “Norman Atlantic” ferry disaster in the Adriatic Sea on 28 December, support was provided to the affected Austrians.

With respect to crisis management, there is regular exchange of information in place between the MFA, the Austrian tourism sector and Austrian companies that are active at international level. The electronic travel registration system, which enables Austrians abroad to receive information by text message or email in the event of a crisis, proved to be a very effective tool. It was used in Egypt, Iraq, Israel/the Palestinian territories, the Philippines, Thailand and Uganda.
Prevention is also playing an increasingly important role in the context of consular crisis management. In the lead-up to the Olympic Winter Games in Sochi in February, detailed crisis prevention plans and measures were prepared in cooperation with the Federal Ministry of the Interior and the Federal Ministry of Defence and Sports. Under the leadership of the MFA, crisis support teams were dispatched on joint exploratory missions to the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain and Turkey. Safety and security measures were optimised at several representation authorities. Crisis response exercises were conducted both at national, European and international level. A joint exercise involving the Federal Ministry of the Interior and the Federal Ministry of Defence and Sports was held in Vienna and Lower Austria in April, at EU level an exercise was conducted in the context of the Integrated Political Crisis Response Mechanism (IPCR) in Brussels in November, an EU crisis exercise was conducted in Kenya in October, and in the context of the pluri-national Non-Combatant Evacuation Group (NCG) a civil-military evacuation exercise took place in Cyprus in May. Although consular protection remains primarily a national responsibility, opportunities for cooperation were explored with a view to improving the services provided in the EU context. Regular exchange on current crisis situations and deliberations on a draft directive on consular protection abroad were held in Brussels. The crisis centres of the EU Member States met for a coordination debate in Rome in December. Furthermore, five Consular Cooperation Initiatives (CCI) were established for Cambodia, Tunisia, Nepal, the Dominican Republic and Nigeria in order to improve coordination of consular activities among EU Member States in the event of a crisis. In this context, the role of the European External Action Service (EEAS) in managing crises at consular level is also to be reviewed.

1.2. General Consular and Legal Issues

1.2.1. Citizens’ Desk

In 2014, Austrians made 10.95 million trips abroad, of which 8.74 million were holiday trips (source: Statistics Austria). Apart from this group, about half a million Austrians live abroad either permanently or for longer periods of time. The Citizens’ Desk and the Austrian representation authorities provide a range of services to these individuals both before they leave and in case of emergency. These services include for instance detailed and constantly updated travel information and advice, information provided around the clock by telephone and in writing, and concrete support in cases requiring specific individual assistance. In the course of the year, the Citizens’ Desk section on the Foreign Ministry’s website was accessed more than 3.8 million times. In total, 15,167 callers dialled 05 011 50–3775 for general consular information. MFA staff also answered 1,700 general requests in writing. A total of 13,061 Austrians called 01–90 11 50–4411, the number set up for
consular emergency cases, and received support and assistance from MFA staff.

At the annual consular conference, Foreign Minister Sebastian Kurz presented highly dedicated staff with the Citizens’ Desk Award for special services.

On 1 November, the provisions governing the Central Civil Status Register (Zentrales Personenstandsregister, ZPR) and the Central Citizenship Register (Zentrales Staatsbürgerschaftsregister, ZSR) entered into force. Austrians abroad may thus now have their civil status and citizenship documents issued by the official professional Austrian representations abroad. This change-over to an electronically managed nationwide register also involved new challenges for the official representation authorities. The Office for Consular Authentications, for example, registered a total of approximately 20,000 authentications and apostilles that may be issued to enable international recognition of Austrian documents abroad.

1.2.2. Assistance in Civil and Criminal Matters

The Austrian representations offered consular assistance in a total of 782 cases worldwide. They are, however, not authorised to legally represent Austrian nationals. On top of these cases, a further 6,979 requests for mutual administrative and judicial assistance by Austrian authorities were handled.

At the end of the year, a total of 829 Austrian nationals were being detained in prisons abroad¹, most of them in Europe.

At regular intervals, representation authorities ascertain that Austrian prison inmates are being treated in line with the relevant national regulations, that such regulations comply with international minimum standards and that Austrian inmates also enjoy any relief they may be entitled to under the existing provisions. In this context, 490 visits were paid to prison inmates.

Another important element of the services provided is the acceptance and forwarding of packages and small sums of money (inmate deposits) to Austrian prison inmates abroad.

In cases of child abduction, direct cooperation between national central authorities (i.e. ministries of justice) is provided for under the Hague Convention on Child Abduction (HCCA). In all cases, especially in countries that are not party to the HCCA, the MFA and the Austrian representations support the affected parent in asserting his/her rights abroad.

The Hague Adoption Convention (HAC) regulates the adoption processes between countries that are parties to the convention. In Austria, each fed-

¹ Statistics include only individuals who are reported to and/or have contacted Austrian representations.
eral province has a central authority operating in line with HAC provisions, which cooperates closely with the MFA and the Federal Ministry of Justice.

Adoptions from countries that are not party to the HAC are in principle possible for Austrians wishing to adopt a child, but do involve substantial administrative efforts. There is ongoing exchange of information between the Austrian representations and the relevant specialist department at the MFA, which keeps the former updated on the applicable legal requirements in connection with the examination of adoption documents. The fight against human trafficking and child trafficking enjoys top priority in this context.

The MFA’s scope of responsibility also includes chairing of negotiations on readmission, police cooperation, extradition and servicing of process agreements. In the reporting period, work was carried out on 14 such agreements.

1.3. Tourist and Cross-border Traffic

1.3.1. Visas

As of 31 December 2014, Austrian nationals holding a regular passport were free to enter 108 states without a visa, including all neighbouring states, Japan, the United Arab Emirates, the USA, many states in Africa and almost all states in South America. Austrians may enter 40 states with an identification card and 18 with a passport that has expired within the last five years. Nationals of 125 states need a visa to travel to Austria.

Visas for Austria were issued at 87 Austrian embassies and consulates. Schengen visas for entering Austria were issued at a further 95 locations by representation authorities of states Austria holds Schengen Representation Agreements with. In turn, Austria – having 78 Schengen representations for 14 states – issued visas at 40 service locations. In 2014, Austria concluded Schengen Representation Agreements and/or expanded existing agreements by including new service locations with Finland, Germany, Liechtenstein, Norway, Portugal and Switzerland. This enables customer-oriented and cost-effective visa processing times.

The visa facilitation agreements between the EU and the Republic of Armenia, the Republic of Azerbaijan and the Republic of Cabo Verde, which inter alia enable holders of diplomatic and service passports to enter the EU Member States’ sovereign territory without a visa, entered into force in the course of the year.

The year 2014 also saw completion of the EU-wide roll-out of the Visa Information System (VIS) for the Austrian representation authorities in North America, Australia and South-East Europe. Thus biometric visa are now being granted on the entire African, American and Australian continents as well as in the Middle East, South Asia and South-East Europe (excl. EU). A further roll-out, which will cover all the remaining representation authori-
ties, is planned to take place in 2015. The Austrian representation authorities processed some 290,000 visas, which is 13 % less than in the previous year.

At the Consular and Administration Conference, the MFA and the Ministry of the Interior jointly organised an information desk on 2 July. The MFA also conducted regular in-house training events on visa and residence issues as well as on-line seminars for consular staff.

Activities carried out by the joint training and inspection team, composed of members of the MFA and the Ministry of Justice, were further intensified at Austrian representations abroad and at headquarters. Inspections included joint checks performed in cooperation with the Federal Ministry of the Interior in states with particularly high migration rates.

Close cooperation with the Federal Ministry of the Interior on the analysis of developments in numbers of visas, ongoing joint training activities in the consular sector and evaluation of visa administration at the representation authorities, including the implementation of relevant measures, was also continued and intensified. Likewise, successful cooperation was continued with the Austrian Federal Economic Chamber, inter alia in the context of a further round table meeting with representatives from the tourism industry.

The Amendment to the Administrative Court Act 2012 that provides for a fundamental reform of visa proceedings entered into force on 1 January. The opportunity to turn to the Federal Administrative Court in order to appeal against decisions taken by Austrian representations in visa matters was used 120 times. In all cases decided so far, the Federal Administrative Court upheld the legal opinion of the representation authorities.

1.4. Austrians abroad

The provision of support and services to Austrian citizens abroad constitutes one of the core tasks of Austrian embassies, consulates and consulates-general.

Just like the MFA’s website dedicated to “Austrians abroad” (www.auslandsoesterreicherInnen.at), the Austrian representations are an important link between Austrians abroad and their (former) home country. They are the first points of contact and service with regard to passport, citizenship and voting matters, further contact with authorities and consular protection, information about Austria, effective crisis preparedness and coordination, or with respect to facilitating and organising Austria-related events.

As there is no obligation to officially register one’s permanent residence abroad, the figures on Austrians living abroad are largely based on estimates. Verifiable figures do not reflect the actual number of Austrians residing abroad. It is to be assumed that approximately 530,000 Austrians live abroad.
About three quarters reside in Germany (243,000) followed by Switzerland (60,000), the USA (27,000), the United Kingdom (25,000), South Africa (18,000), Australia and Argentina (15,000 each). About 390,000 Austrians abroad are registered at Austrian representations and of these some 315,000 are of voting age. However, in connection with the elections to the European Parliament in May, the number of Austrians abroad registered in the municipalities’ electoral registers – which is a prerequisite for participating in elections – totalled only 34,773.

Austrians abroad may also register online with Austrian representation authorities. A modern standardised registration system established at Austrian representations worldwide serves to increase the number of registered Austrians abroad and enhance data quality, ensuring quick and efficient contact (by email or text message).

The number of Austrians at heart – who do not or no longer hold Austrian citizenship but feel a particular attachment to Austria due to their former citizenship, family or business connections, extended stays in Austria or for other reasons – can only be estimated and probably comprises several hundred thousand individuals.

### 1.4.1. Organisations representing Austrians abroad

Ties between Austrians living abroad and their home country are maintained particularly through associations of Austrians abroad and other societies abroad that have links with Austria, and increasingly also via social media. There are 413 such associations and societies in 60 countries. The Vienna-based Auslandsösterreicher-Weltbund (AÖWB), the World Federation of Austrians Abroad, is the umbrella organisation, interest group and service platform for associations of Austrians abroad. Since 1 July 2004, Gustav Chlestil has been the President of the AÖWB and Irmgard Helperstorfer has served as Secretary-General. The AÖWB maintains the website www.weltbund.at and publishes the magazine “ROTWEISSROT”. In 2012, the Federation launched its internet platform at www.austrians.org.

The AÖWB organises annual meetings of Austrians abroad, the most recent of such meetings, which are always held in Austria, took place in Baden from 4 to 7 September. Funding provided by the MFA to the AÖWB amounted to 200,000 euros. Burgenländische Gemeinschaft is the umbrella organisation of all natives of Burgenland who live abroad. It aims to maintain and deepen the ties of all natives of Burgenland worldwide with their home province. This goal is also pursued by its periodical magazine “Die Burgenländische Gemeinschaft” and the social network “Burgenland Bunch” established in 1996. The President of the Burgenländische Gemeinschaft is Walter Dujmovits.
1.4.2. Support for Austrian Nationals abroad

The Fund for Austrians Abroad was established in 1967 with a view to assisting Austrians who live abroad and find themselves in serious difficulties. The Federal Act on the Fund for Austrians Abroad (Bundesgesetz über den Auslandsösterreicher-Fonds, AÖF-G), Federal Law Gazette I No. 67/2006, which came into force on 1 January 2007, extended the group of potential recipients of support.

The fund is financed with a total of 600,000 euros by Austria’s nine federal provinces and the MFA, which each contribute 50 per cent. Drawing on existing financial reserves, the fund provided financial assistance totalling 620,200 euros to 1,334 Austrians in need in 65 countries. The Board of Trustees appointed by the Federal Government is chaired by Ambassador (ret.) Markus Lutterotti, the office of Managing Director is held by Josef Knapp. The Christmas Campaign, organised by the MFA every year in support of Austrians abroad in need, raised donations in cash and in kind totalling 55,440 euros, which went to 479 Austrian nationals in need in 41 countries worldwide.

For Austrians living abroad who are elderly or severely ill and no longer able to care for themselves, the MFA can arrange for repatriation including accommodation in a suitable institution in Austria. Prerequisites for such repatriation are inter alia that help cannot be provided by relatives or local relief organisations, the individuals’ state of health allows them to travel and they agree to repatriation. In the course of the year, 16 Austrians were thus repatriated from ten countries – China, Czech Republic, Dominican Republic, Germany, Italy, Mexico, Philippines, South Africa, Syria and Thailand – and placed with Austrian social welfare and/or care institutions.

1.4.3. Participation by Austrians abroad in Political Decision-making in Austria and the European Union

Since 1990, Austrians who are on the (European) electoral register and are either residing in other countries or temporarily staying abroad on election days, have had the right to vote in Austrian parliamentary and presidential elections and to participate in nationwide plebiscites and referenda. Austrians abroad – as well as non-Austrian citizens of the European Union with their main residence in Austria – can also vote in elections for Austrian Members of the European Parliament (EP).

Voting rights of Austrians abroad – that were simplified substantially as of 2007 – enable participation in elections from the age of 16. Postal voting is possible in Austria and abroad for anyone unable to cast their vote in a polling station on election day. A signed affidavit is now sufficient for casting a postal vote. Postal charges due for sending absentee ballots by normal mail from all parts of the world back to Austria are borne by the Republic of Aus-
tria. Furthermore, Austrians abroad can order absentee ballots in advance for a period of ten years ("absentee ballot subscription") and will automatically receive their absentee ballots for all nationwide elections, plebiscites and referenda during this period. The municipality in which they are registered as voters informs them ex officio about forthcoming elections, plebiscites and referenda and also when they are about to be deleted from the electoral register.

Under Austrian Federal Constitutional Law, the Austrian federal provinces also have the right to give Austrians living abroad the opportunity to vote in the regional parliamentary elections in their former federal province of residence. So far, the provinces of Lower Austria, Tyrol and Vorarlberg have implemented this type of voting right.

The range of services provided to Austrians abroad continues to be extended. The latest improvements and adaptations to current needs related to election law, online registration and information provided on the internet. This mainly concerned facilitated participation in elections from abroad by simplifications in the area of postal voting introduced by the Voting Rights Amendment Act of 2009 and extended in 2010. At the elections to the European Parliament (EP) on 25 May witnesses were thus no longer required nor was it necessary to indicate the place and the time of the affidavit on the voting card. Confidentiality of personal data was ensured with the new design of the voting card. In the context of the European elections 2014 it was for the first time possible to prepare statistics on the number of Austrians abroad who are on the electoral registers and participated in the elections. In line with these statistics, their turnout totalled 22,440 (i.e. 65.9 % of the voting cards issued). As was the case on previous occasions, an election office was set up at the MFA where staff provided information and advice via a telephone hotline to Austrians abroad and answered relevant emails. A specifically established election and voter information website (www.wahlinfo.aussenministerium.at) provided detailed information on voting rights of Austrians abroad including all required forms.

Acting in collaboration with Austrian authorities, ministries, competence centres and experts, the MFA promotes development and use of information and communication technology (ICT) applications for Austrians abroad, especially with regard to eGovernment and broader citizen participation. Increased use is also being made of new forms of communication (social media).

1.5. Services provided to Business and Industry

The success of Austrian business and industry abroad is a very relevant driving force for our country and thus promotes growth and prosperity. Export volumes of more than 128 billion euros generated in 2014 marked the fourth consecutive year of record-breaking exports.
Services provided to Business and Industry

With more than 100 representation authorities, the MFA has established a broad network around the world. Federal Minister Sebastian Kurz thus invites Austrian business and industry to make increased use of this network. With a view to further extending the services provided by the Foreign Ministry to Austrian companies, the Foreign Minister set up the MFA Business Support Service unit (“BMEIA-Unternehmensservice”).

Austrian companies now have a dedicated central contact point at the MFA to which they may direct any questions and concerns. Cooperation, networking and support are the three core tasks the new contact desk is mandated with. The Business Support Service unit provides political analyses and forecasts for use by export companies and investors. Via the Austrian representations abroad it can draw on a dense network of links and contacts with authorities, governmental bodies, institutions and policymakers in the target country. Furthermore, foreign cultural policy activities including cultural fora are being increasingly opened for cooperation with Austrian companies.

The MFA’s “Unternehmensservice” also organises a wide range of events to facilitate networking and the exchange of information. At “Business meets Diplomacy” events, for example, companies may present themselves to ambassadors accredited to Austria. At the annual Ambassadors’ Conference, companies may obtain information on the situation in export countries from Austrian ambassadors and heads of representations. As part of the series of events organised under the heading “One Day At...” Foreign Ministry staff visit various companies in order to learn more about the companies’ perspectives and the topics that are relevant to the specific business or industry. Another forum is the Round Table on foreign trade (Runder Außenwirtschaftstisch) where the MFA discusses various different countries and presents the latest events and developments that are of particular relevance to Austrian companies.

With almost 1,500 activities involving the provision of sound and well-researched information, organisational assistance and contacts, the MFA’s “Unternehmensservice” supported more than 300 companies over the course of 2014.
2. Austria in the European Union

2.1. European Elections 2014 – the Start of a new European Legislative Term

2.1.1. The Elections to the European Parliament 2014

The year 2014 was especially marked by the eighth regular elections to the European Parliament (EP) held from 22 to 25 May. It was the first election to be held since the entry into force of the Treaty of Lisbon. A total of 16,351 candidates from 948 parties and independent lists stood for election in the 28 Member States. At 42.54 % the EU-wide turnout was slightly lower than in the 2009 elections (43 %), while it reached 45.4 % in Austria (2009: 46 %).

An important new feature of the 2014 European elections was the nomination of Europe-wide top candidates for the office of President of the European Commission by numerous European political parties. The objective was to raise public interest in the elections, increase voter turnout as far as possible and ensure that the election campaign focuses more strongly on European policy issues. The candidates nominated were Jean-Claude Juncker (EPP), Martin Schulz (PES), Guy Verhofstadt (ALDE), Ska Keller/José Bové (Greens) and Alexis Tsipras (Left).

Based on the results of the elections, pro-European parties continue to hold the majority in the EP. Although EU-sceptical parties were able to significantly increase their share of the vote in some Member States, this did not translate in the formation of a new group at EU level. All seven political groups that had already been represented in the EP during the previous term constituted again. The Group of the European People’s Party (EPP) won 29.43 % of the votes and 220 of the 751 seats, followed by the Group of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats (S&D) with 25.43 % of the votes and 191 seats, the European Conservatives and Reformist Group (ECR) with 9.32 % (71 seats), the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe (ALDE) with 8.92 % (67 seats), the European United Left/Nordic Green Left (GUE/NGL) with 6.92 % (52 seats), the Greens/European Free Alliance (Greens/EFA) with 6.66 % (50 seats) and the Europe of Freedom and Direct Democracy (EFD) Group with 6.93 % (48 seats). A total of 52 members – and thus almost 7 % of MEPs – are not attached to any group.

At its constituent session on 1 July, Martin Schulz was re-elected President of the EP for the next 2.5 years. Schulz received 409 of 612 valid votes and thus the required absolute majority. The election of the 14 Vice-Presidents of the EP was also held on 1 July, while those for the chairpersons and deputies of the EP committees was held on 7 July.
2.1.2. Appointment of the new European Commission and Key Priorities for the coming Legislative Period

Acting on the proposal of the European Council, the EP elected Jean-Claude Juncker, top candidate of the party that had won the majority of the votes at the European elections, as the new President of the European Commission (EC). The nomination by the European Council on 27 June was for the first time preceded by a vote in which the Heads of Government of two Member States, namely the United Kingdom and Hungary, voted against Juncker. The election in the EP Plenary Session was held by secret ballot on 15 July and produced the following result: 422 MEPs voted for Juncker, 250 against and 47 abstained.

In the lead-up to the plenary vote, the EC President designate Juncker met with the individual parliamentary groups for exploratory talks in which he answered questions from MEPs before presenting his programme, the Political Guidelines for the new EC (“A New Start for Europe: My Agenda for Jobs, Growth, Fairness and Democratic Change”). Based on these Political Guidelines of the EC, the “Strategic Agenda for the Union in Times of Change” (see Chapter 2.3.4) is to be implemented. The programme focuses on ten strategic areas: the promotion of employment, growth and investment, the connected Digital Single Market, building a resilient Energy Union and forward-looking climate policy, a deepened and fair internal market based on a strong industry, a stronger and fairer Economic and Monetary Union, a reasonable and balanced EU-US Free Trade Agreement TTIP, an area of justice and fundamental rights based on mutual trust, a new migration policy, a stronger role for the EU as a global player and a Union of democratic change. Concrete results are to be achieved in these areas. Other areas which are handled more effectively at national, regional and local level are to be managed by the EU Member States.

The goal of the new structural and substantive re-orientation of the EC is to enable the best-possible implementation of these priority tasks defined for the EC’s new term. This is to be achieved inter alia by the EC’s new structure. The President of the Commission is assisted by seven Vice-Presidents who are to play a key role: they will be in charge of well-defined priority projects, steer and coordinate work across the Commission in the key areas of Juncker’s Political Guidelines and cooperate closely in project teams with those Commissioners who are responsible for the respective project area. They thus assume important coordinating and controlling functions (four of the seven Vice Presidents do not have a specific portfolio) and will represent the Commission’s policies towards third parties – while ensuring a better focus within the Commission.

Together with the EU Member States, the President of the Commission agreed on a list of candidates for the EC’s areas of responsibility. At a special meeting of the European Council on 30 August 2014, the Italian Foreign Minis-
ter Federica Mogherini was appointed High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy (EU HR), succeeding Catherine Ashton in this function. Before the entire Plenary Session of the EP voted on the proposed Commission, the 27 designated members of the new EC had to answer questions from the MEPs in public hearings and were each subject to a thorough individual assessment by the members of the competent EP committees. In spite of initial criticism voiced with respect to the commissioners selected and delays due to the rejection of a designated member of the Commission by the EP – as had been the case with previous nominations of commissioners – the new EC was able to start its work as planned on 1 November. The members of the Commission were elected in the EP’s plenary session on 22 October by a large majority and appointed by the European Council on 24 October. On taking office, the President of the EC Juncker stated that he wanted a “more political Commission” whose priorities are focused on major challenges and political projects.

2.1.3. Key Area of Activity: Better Regulation and Subsidiarity

The office of First Vice President of the EC, held by Frans Timmermans, was newly created. He plays a special role within the group of commissioners and is responsible for Better Regulation, Inter-Institutional Relations, the Rule of Law and the Charter of Fundamental Rights and will inter alia seek to ensure that every European legislative project respects the principle of subsidiarity. He is also responsible for relations with national parliaments. In line with the declarations made by EC President Juncker, it is to be ensured that the EU focuses on central common challenges and leaves all those issues that are better managed at national level to the Member States thus also avoiding over-regulation.

The work programme for 2015 presented by the EC on 16 December illustrates the new approach to its political self-perception. Instead of launching some 130 legal initiatives per year the annual number of new legislative proposals will not exceed 23. As expected, these 23 new initiatives will focus on the ten priorities defined by EC President Juncker in the political guidelines presented during his candidacy. The comparably small number of new measures is in line with his intention of focusing on those projects that provide the strongest boost to employment and whose prospects for adoption by the EU legislators are good. In line with the principle of subsidiarity, the Commission will refrain from dealing with topics that can be regulated at national and regional level.

2.2. Further important Developments at European Level

In 2014, important initiatives were launched aiming in particular at strengthening growth and employment in the EU and expanding the banking union
Further important Developments at European Level

(see Chapter 2.7.2.). Both the Greek and the Italian EU Presidencies set priorities in this area. There was renewed focus on work on the Multiannual Financial Framework 2014–20, the revision of the EU Structural and Cohesion Policy, the development of the Digital Agenda and the Union’s Regional and Neighbourhood Policy (see Chapter 2.5.1.).

In addition, the following topics figured prominently in European policy discussions during the reporting period:

By appointing top candidates for the European elections the European political parties fulfilled their task defined by the EU treaties, i.e. to “contribute to the formation of a European political awareness”. This meant that for the first time the general public actually became aware of these parties, which had indeed been in existence for many years. By adopting the regulations on the statute and funding of European political parties and foundations on 22 October, the Council strives to further facilitate their activities at European level. The new statute will be applicable as of 1 January 2017 and will from the financial year 2018 onwards enable activities by European political parties and foundations to be supported with funds from the Union’s budget.

Another opportunity for democratic participation at EU level – apart from the European elections – is the European Citizens’ Initiative (ECI). The fact that this tool is well received by the European public is illustrated by the large number of citizens’ initiatives already submitted to the EC. Since 1 April 2012, there have been a total of 46 initiatives, of which, however, only three were able to gather the required minimum support of 1 million signatures from EU citizens. 20 citizens’ initiatives were not admitted by the EC, as the initiatives submitted were regarded by the EC as being outside the framework within which it is authorised to submit a proposal for EU legislation. Proceedings can be brought before the European Court of Justice to contest the non-adoption of some European citizens’ initiatives. Currently, there are several cases pending before the European Court of Justice. Experience gained to date by Member States and civil society was evaluated ahead of the review of the use made so far of EU Regulation 211/2011 with regard to the European Citizens’ Initiative.

Under the initiative “A new narrative for Europe”, launched by the then President of the Commission José Manuel Barroso in April 2013, European citizens and especially artists and intellectuals were encouraged to generate ideas on further developing the post-war theme of “peace through a common market”, which has indeed been in place for a long time, and updating it in the light of new challenges. An Austrian event under this initiative was organised at the Museumsquartier in Vienna on 21 January and the conclusions prepared by the participants were presented to Commission President Barroso. The contributions from all events were included in a final declaration on Barroso’s initiative, which was presented by the President of the Commission in Berlin on 1 March.
Austria made an active contribution towards the Council’s work aimed at improving the EU’s opportunities for controlling respect for the rule of law principles and fundamental values in the Member States, especially in the field of justice (the “rule of law initiative”). On 18 March, the EC presented the Communication “A new EU Framework to strengthen the rule of law” that provides for a three-stage dialogue procedure between the Commission and the Member State concerned prior to launching sanctions proceedings under Art. 7 of the TEU. At the General Affairs Council (GAC) meeting on 16 December, the Council and all EU Member States adopted Conclusions establishing a political dialogue among Member States in the context of the Council in order to to protect and safeguard the rule of law. The findings produced are to be evaluated by the end of 2016 at the latest.

2.3. Austria in the Institutions of the European Union

2.3.1. The Permanent Representation of Austria to the European Union

Austria’s direct point of contact to the institutions of the Union, the Council Presidency and other Member States is the Permanent Representation of Austria to the European Union, in which all federal ministries, the Liaison Office of the Federal Provinces as well as social partners and interest groups (the Austrian Economic Chamber, the Federal Chamber of Labour, the Chamber of Agriculture, the Trade Union Federation, the Association of Municipalities, the Association of Cities and Towns, the Federation of Austrian Industry and the National Bank) are represented by qualified experts. The Permanent Representation’s central task is representing Austria in preparing the political and legislative decisions taken by the EU. The relevant negotiations are held in the competent Council working groups and committees in some 4,500 meetings per year in which staff from the Permanent Representation or from the Federal Ministries participate. Before being formally adopted at ministers’ level, the negotiation results generally have to pass the ambassadorial level (the Committee of the Permanent Representatives and, as required, also the Political and Security Committee).

By making specific use of their networks, the Permanent Representation’s staff also seek to represent Austria’s interests outside of Council meetings and in all phases of decision-making and legislative processes. The Permanent Representation also provides reports and analyses that serve as a basis for the formulation of Austria’s positions in EU bodies.

As decisions taken at European level often have immediate political and legal implications for Austria, special focus is placed on informing the public about important developments and work on legislation initiatives in a timely manner. The Representation’s press office thus also supports the Austrian media’s EU correspondents in Brussels and updates them on current developments and activities.
The Permanent Representation’s tasks also include providing interested citizens with first-hand insights into its activities and the work of the European institutions. In 2014, the Permanent Representation’s Visitor Service thus looked after 141 groups of visitors (a total of 4,329 persons).

The Permanent Representation also assists Austrians wishing to apply for jobs that are advertised by EU institutions. The services range from providing information about jobs and vacancies that are advertised every month by the Commission for delegated national experts and internship opportunities to the provision of individual assistance to applicants in handling requests of all kinds and providing them with support in selection procedures.

2.3.2. Austrians in the EU Institutions

In office since 10 February 2010, Commissioner and former Federal Minister Johannes Hahn was responsible for regional policy in the Commission Barroso II. Following completion of the national nomination process, Austria nominated Johannes Hahn for a second term. Since 1 November he has held the office of Commissioner for European Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations in the Juncker Commission and represents EU HR Federica Mogherini in these areas.

Since October 2009, former Federal Minister Maria Berger has been active as a judge at the European Court of Justice (ECJ) in Luxembourg and was reappointed for the period from 7 October 2012 to 6 October 2018. Since September 2013, the Austrian Viktor Kreuschitz has been judge at the General Court. His term covers the period until 31 August 2016.

Since July 2011, former Austrian Vice-Chancellor Wilhelm Molterer has been Vice-President and Member of the Management Committee of the European Investment Bank (EIB). His mandate expires on 31 August 2015.

At the European Court of Auditors Oskar Herics, head of the finance and sustainability department at the Austrian Court of Auditors, succeeded Harald Wögerbauer in March as the Austrian member of the Audit Group I “Preservation and Management of Natural Resources”.

In 2014, a total of 472 Austrians (218 women and 254 men) worked at the EC, making up a share of 1.57% of the EC’s total headcount. A total of 17 Austrians (8 women and 9 men) were employed at the ECJ, representing 0.79% of the Court’s total staff. A total of 72 Austrians (44 women and 28 men) worked in the EP, making up 0.9% of the Parliament’s headcount. The 27 Austrians (11 women and 16 men) working in the Council’s Secretariat-General account for 0.96% of its total staff, 32 Austrians (14 women and 18 men) work at the European Bank of Investment (EBI) and 15 Austrians (7 female and 8 male) are employed at the European Court of Auditors (ECA).
The European Parliament

Based on the outcome of the European elections held from 22 to 25 May, the 18 Austrian seats in the EP are now distributed as follows: ÖVP (Austrian People’s Party) 5, SPÖ (Social Democratic Party) 5, FPÖ (Freedom Party) 4, GRÜNE (Greens) 3 and NEOS (New Austria and Liberal Forum) 1. Fourteen of the Austrian MEPs belong to a political group in the EP (EPP, S&D, ALDE and Greens). At the constituent meeting held by the EP on 1 July, the Austrian MEP Ulrike Lunacek was elected Vice President of the EP and is thus the highest-ranking Austrian in the European Parliament.

The Austrian MEPs belong to the following EP Committees:

- Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs (LIBE): Heinz K. Becker, Ulrike Lunacek, Angelika Mlinar, Harald Vilimsky, Josef Weidenholzer
- Employment and Social Affairs (EMPL): Heinz K. Becker, Evelyn Regner, Monika Vana
- Petitions (PETI): Heinz K. Becker
- Foreign Affairs (AFET): Eugen Freund, Barbara Kappel, Ulrike Lunacek, Harald Vilimsky
- Sub-Committee for Security and Defence (SEDE): Eugen Freund
- Industry, Research and Energy (ITRE): Eugen Freund, Angelika Mlinar, Michel Reimon, Paul Rübig
- Environment, Public Health and Food Safety (ENVI): Karin Kadenbach, Elisabeth Köstinger
- Budgetary Control (CONT): Karin Kadenbach, Claudia Schmidt
- Agriculture and Rural Development (AGRI): Elisabeth Köstinger, Karin Kadenbach
- Economic and Monetary Affairs (ECON): Othmar Karas, Barbara Kappel, Michel Reimon
- Internal Market and Consumer Protection (IMCO): Othmar Karas, Franz Obermayr, Josef Weidenholzer
- Women’s Rights and Gender Equality (FEMM): Elisabeth Köstinger, Angelika Mlinar, Ulrike Lunacek, Georg Mayer, Evelyn Regner, Monika Vana
- International Trade (INTA): Jörg Leichtfried, Franz Obermayr
- Transport and Tourism (TRAN): Jörg Leichtfried, Georg Mayer, Claudia Schmidt
- Legal Affairs (JURI): Evelyn Regner
- Culture and Education (CULT): Michel Reimon
- Budgets (BUDG): Paul Rübig, Monika Vana
- Development (DEVE): Paul Rübig
- Regional Development (REGI): Claudia Schmidt, Monika Vana
- Human Rights (DROI): Josef Weidenholzer
During his visit to Vienna from 16 to 17 March, the President of the EP Martin Schulz held bilateral talks with Federal President Heinz Fischer, the President of the National Council Barbara Prammer and Federal Minister Sebastian Kurz and participated in a meeting of the EU Main Committee of the National Council and at a conference on peace and democracy organised to commemorate the outbreak of World War 1 in 1914.

2.3.4. The European Council

The European Council elects its President by qualified majority for a period of office of two and a half years. At a special meeting of the European Council held on 30 August, the Prime Minister of the Republic of Poland Donald Tusk was elected new President of the European Council. On 1 December he took over the position from his predecessor Herman Van Rompuy. Donald Tusk was also appointed President of the Euro Summit.

On 26 and 27 June, the European Council defined five overarching priorities in the “Strategic Agenda for the Union in Times of Change”, which are to guide the EU’s work for the coming five years. These priorities focus on stimulating growth, competitiveness and employment, the establishment of an Energy Union and forward-looking climate policy, a Union of Freedom, Security and Justice as well as strengthening the EU’s role as a global player. The European Council called for consistent and coherent implementation of this agenda in the forthcoming European legislative period.

In 2014, the European Council held four ordinary and two extraordinary meetings, one extraordinary meeting of the Heads of State and Government and an informal dinner of the Heads of State and Government. A summit of the Heads of State and Government of the euro area was also held and presided over by the President of the European Council. The first European Council meeting chaired by Donald Tusk was held on 18 December and dealt primarily with the promotion of investment and the situation in Ukraine.

2.3.5. The Council

In the Council of the EU Austria is represented by the relevant members of the Federal Government. In contrast to the European Council, the principle of the semi-annually rotating presidency between the Member States has been retained. Thus the rotating presidency was held by Greece in the first six months and by Italy in the second half of the year. In 2014, a total of 85 Council meetings were convened in Brussels and in Luxembourg involving participation by members of the Austrian government.

The presidency of the Foreign Affairs Council is held by the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy (EU HR) who is elected for a term of five years. The General Affairs Council, which is com-
posed of the Member States’ foreign and/or European affairs ministers plays a special role. It coordinates the other Council formations’ activities, prepares European Council meetings and takes decisions of horizontal importance (for instance on enlargement and on the multiannual financial framework).

At the beginning of the new legislative period at EU level, the Council, following an initiative of the Italian Presidency, started work on reviewing and enhancing its working methods on 10 September. The goal was to have the functioning of the EU system as well as its capabilities to implement the strategic agenda for the next five years, as adopted by the European Council on 26 and 27 June, analysed by the dedicated Council working group, the “Friends of the Presidency”.

The Friends of the Presidency Group dealt in particular with horizontal issues relating to the interaction of the individual bodies, the role of the national parliaments, the functioning of the Council of the EU in the context of inter-institutional relations as well as the untapped potential of the Treaty of Lisbon.

Based on these works, the Presidency on 12 December submitted a report to the Council in which it set out how to enhance the effectiveness of the EU’s activities and ensure implementation of the Union’s overarching priorities. Essential levers identified in this context were in particular strengthening subsidiarity and proportionality as well as cooperation between the European Commission and the national parliaments, improving the annual and multiannual inter-institutional programme planning and enhancing efforts towards improved legislative processes.

2.3.6. The European Commission

According to Article 17 paragraph 4 of the TEU, the European Commission consists of one national of each Member State including its President and the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy. Based on a decision adopted by the European Council on 22 May 2013, the Commission shall also consist of one national of each Member State for the term from 1 November 2014 to October 2019. The decision provides for a review of the Commission’s size before the end of the 2019 term of office. For the first time, the new Commission was appointed fully in line with the procedure provided for in the Treaty of Lisbon.

Again in 2014, as has been the case in previous years, numerous EU Commissioners visited Austria. They participated in and contributed to EU events and panel discussions on topical EU policy issues held across the country. EU Commissioners paid a total of 52 visits to Austria, 36 of which by EU Regional Policy Commissioner Johannes Hahn.
2.3.7. The European External Action Service

In 2014, the European External Action Service (EEAS) was in its fourth year of operation. On 30 June the European Court of Auditors presented a special report on the Service. The points of criticism more or less corresponded to those already included in the report submitted by the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy on 26 July 2013 and were largely supported by the Member States.

By the end of the year, 319 members of the EU Member States’ national diplomatic services worked with the EEAS (this is equivalent to 33.8 % of all EEAS positions). Of this staff, about 146 (37.3 %) work at headquarters and 173 (44.9 %) in the delegations. At the end of 2014, the EEAS headcount totalled 3,308 individuals of which 37.3 % worked at headquarters in Brussels and 62.7 % in the worldwide network of the Union’s around 140 delegations.

To date, eleven Austrian diplomats have successfully completed application processes for temporary positions at senior level in the EEAS and for functions allocated to them. Representatives from Member States were involved in the selection procedures for senior management functions as members of the selection commission. Taking account of all employment groups – including officials from the Commission, the Council Secretariat and staff employed as national delegates – 60 Austrians worked in the EEAS, including the head of the EU delegation to the UN in New York, the head of the EU delegation to Japan, the head of the EU delegation to Peru, the chairman of the Council working group on “Human Rights” and the EU Managing Director for North Africa, the Middle East, the Arabian Peninsula, Iraq and Iran.

2.3.8. The Court of Justice of the European Union

The Republic of Austria is represented before the Court of Justice of the European Union, ECJ, (consisting of the Court and the General Court) by legal counsels from the Constitutional Service of the Federal Chancellery. In 2014, Austrian courts initiated 15 new preliminary ruling proceedings (i.e. proceedings where a national court refers a question relating to the interpretation or validity of Community law to the ECJ).

At the end of 2014, there were three proceedings for alleged infringements of Union law pending against the Republic of Austria. These infringement proceedings concerned the implementation of Directive 2009/28/EC on the promotion of the use of energy from renewable sources, the implementation of Railway Safety Directive 2004/49/EC and the incorrect implementation of the Water Framework Directive 2000/60/EC when approving the construction of a hydro power plant on the “Schwarze Sulm”.

Regarding the proposal aimed at raising the number of judges submitted by the Court in 2014, the Council reached a preliminary agreement on the prin-
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ciples. In order to resolve the problems of increased work load, the resulting backlog and lengthy duration of proceedings at the Court of the EU (which inter alia examines individual complaints as court of first instance), the number of judges is to be doubled in three stages from 28 to 56; starting for the time being in 2016 by adding twelve judges based on a proposal submitted by the Court in 2011.

In an opinion the ECJ also dealt with the issue of a potential accession of the EU to the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR). Under the EU Treaty the EU is obliged to accede to the ECHR. This accession would create an additional opportunity for filing an individual complaint directly against the EU in areas of Union competences and/or would enable a review of Union legislation before the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) for compatibility with the ECHR. After negotiations on an ECHR accession agreement between the EU and the Council of Europe (CoE) were completed at officials’ level in April 2013, the EC commissioned the ECJ with preparing an opinion on the draft’s compatibility with primary legislation. In its Opinion 2/13 of 18 December, the ECJ concludes that the draft accession agreement is not in all aspects compatible with primary law requirements. Prior to taking any further steps in the negotiation process with the other Contracting parties of the ECHR, the Commission and the Member States therefore have to consult on required and appropriate measures for implementing the requirements outlined in the opinion.

2.3.9. The Committee of the Regions

The Committee of the Regions (CoR) is a consultative body and as such provides a forum for the representation of regional and local interests in connection with European integration. Austria is represented by twelve members. Each of the nine federal provinces has a seat and the towns, cities and municipalities together have a total of three seats. Based on a transitional regulation, the Committee has been composed of 353 members since the accession of the Republic of Croatia. The Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU), however, provides for a maximum of 350 members.

Based on a proposal submitted by the Commission on 13 June, the General Affairs Council on 16 December adopted a unanimous decision on the composition of the CoR. Taking account of the ceiling provided for in the Treaty, Cyprus, Estonia and Luxembourg will thus lose one seat each. Austria will retain its twelve seats during the next five year term.

2.3.10. The European Economic and Social Committee

The European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) is a consultative body that involves economic and social interest groups in the EU’s legisla-
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tive process. At an organisational level, the EESC’s members are subdivided into the Workers’ Group, the Employers’ Group and the Various Interests’ Group. Topics are dealt with in six thematic sections. Austria is represented by twelve members – including representatives from the social partners and the Austrian Consumer Protection Association.

Following Croatia’s accession to the EU, the EESC has been composed of 353 members based on the transitional regulation in the accession treaty. The Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU), however, provides for a maximum of 350 members for the EESC. By the end of the year it had not been possible to reach agreement on the future composition of the EESC.

2.4. Participation of the Austrian Parliament at European Level and National Cooperation between Parliament and the Federal Provinces

The Treaty of Lisbon established new participation rights in matters relating to the EU for the National Council and the Federal Council. The new rights, especially the opportunity to submit “reasoned opinions” in the context of subsidiarity checks, to present “communications” in the context of political dialogue with EU institutions and to bring an action before the European Court of Justice on the grounds of infringement of the subsidiarity principle were added to the opportunities for delivering opinions to members of the Federal Government in effect since 1995 under Art. 23e of the Federal Constitutional Act.

The Austrian Parliament again made intensive use of these new tools in 2014. The EU Committee of the Austrian Federal Council played a particularly active role by submitting reasoned opinions on legislative proposals from the Commission, ranking among the most active parliamentary chambers in an EU-wide comparison.

In the National Council, the Main Committee on 25 June adopted a communication under Art. 23f par. 4 of the Federal Constitutional Act regarding the meeting of the European Council (26 and 27 June). The Standing Subcommittee on Matters relating to the EU adopted:

Opinions under Art. 23e par. 3 of the Federal Constitutional Act
• on the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership with the United States of America (TTIP) (23 April)

Reasoned opinions under Art. 23g par. 1 of the Federal Constitutional Act
• on single member private limited liability companies (28 May)

Communications under 23f par. 4 of the Federal Constitutional Act
• on the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership with the United States of America (TTIP) (23 April)
• on the European Platform to Enhance Cooperation in the prevention and
deterrence of Undeclared Work (2 July)

• on the production and labelling of organic products (4 December)

On 4 December, the Standing Sub-Committee on Matters relating to the EU
moreover decided that the project in the context of the EU under Art. 23e of
the Federal Constitutional Act regarding 10972/14 – position of the Council
at first reading with a view to the adoption of a Directive of the EP and the
Council amending Directive 2001/18/EC as regards the possibility for the
Member States to restrict or prohibit the cultivation of genetically modified
organisms (GMO) in their territory (32809/EU XXV.GP) is to be dealt with by
the National Council.

The EU Committee of the Austrian Federal Council adopted:

**Opinions** under Art. 23e of the Austrian Federal Constitutional Act

• on competences with respect to the TTIP negotiations (8 July)

**Communications** under Art. 23f par. 4 of the Federal Constitutional Act

• on procedural safeguards for children suspected or accused in criminal
proceedings (13 February)

• on the cloning of animals of the bovine, porcine, ovine, caprine and equine
species kept and reproduced for farming purposes (13 February)

• on competitive and resource-efficient urban mobility (25 March)

• on competences with respect to the TTIP negotiations (8 July)

• on zootechnical and genealogical regulations for trade in and imports into
the Union of breeding animals and their germinal products (8 October)

• on the dissemination of earth observation satellite data for commercial
purposes (8 October)

**Reasoned opinions** under Art. 23g par. 1 of the Federal Constitutional Act

• on the production and labelling of organic products (14 May)

• on single member private limited liability companies (27 May)

• on amending the Directive on waste, packaging and packaging waste, land-
fill of waste, end-of-life vehicles, batteries and accumulators, and waste
batteries and accumulators, waste electronic and electrical equipment
(18 September)

The participation rights of the provinces and municipalities laid down in
Article 23d of the Federal Constitutional Act include the right to be noti-
...
Chaired by the MFA, Austria’s positions in the Committee of Permanent Representatives (COREPER) are coordinated on a weekly basis. This process ensures the continuous involvement of the federal ministries, the social partners, the National Bank, the Federation of Austrian Industry, and the provinces and municipalities in the opinion-forming process in Austria. Since November 2004, the individual ministries have submitted reports to Parliament on their working programme and planned legislation at EU level at the beginning of each year. These reports provide information to members of parliament in the lead-up to decision-making processes and enable them to take part in the political opinion-forming process at a very early stage.

Apart from these tools for participation of national parliaments in the EU law-making process, interparliamentary cooperation may also contribute towards strengthening the voice of national parliaments. The Conference of Parliamentary Committees for Union Affairs (COSAC) that convenes bi-annually continued its work to which Austrian MEPs also contributed. The plenary meetings were held from 15 to 17 June and from 30 October to 2 November. In June, COSAC presented its 21st Bi-annual Report and in November the 22nd Bi-annual Report of COSAC on EU Practices and Procedures with relevance for parliamentary control within the EU. Other fora for exchange are the bi-annual meetings of speakers of parliament, the Interparliamentary Conference for the CFSP which met from 3 to 4 April and the Conference on Stability, Coordination and Governance of the Economic and Monetary Union, which was held in the context of the European Parliamentary Week that took place from 20 to 22 January. The focus was on economic and budget policy coordination of Member States in the context of the “European semester”. In line with the decision adopted by the Conference of Speakers of EU Parliaments in Nicosia in April 2013, the national parliaments of the EU Member States and the EP will at the beginning of each European semester have the opportunity to discuss the economic, budgetary and social aspects associated with increased coordination under the EMU and adopt recommendations to be submitted to the Council and the Commission.

2.5. Internal Policies of the European Union

2.5.1. Economic, Social and Territorial Cohesion

EU structural and cohesion policy remains an important tool for investments, growth and the creation of jobs at EU level and for structural reform at national level. Based on the new legal framework (seven regulations), the Commission adopted a number of delegated acts and implemented acts to further design its content, and in coordination with the Commission the Member States started preparing Operational Programmes for the period 2014–2020. The strategic orientation of the use made of the European Structural and Investment Funds (ESI) for Austria is defined in the partnership agreement
“Strat.at 2020” concluded between Austria and the European Commission in October. An indicative amount of some 5.18 billion euros is available from the ESI Funds for the entire period 2014–2020, which have to be supplemented by national funding. The ESI Funds are made up of the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD, approx. 3.9 billion euros), the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF, approx. 536 million euros), the European Social Fund (ESF, approx. 442 million euros) and the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF, approx. seven million euros). ERDF funds of 257 million euros will also be made available for European Territorial Cooperation (ETC), which Austria intends to invest in seven cross-border and three transnational programmes. In December, the European Commission approved the Operational Programmes for the EAFRD, the ERDF, the ESF and the ETC programmes for cross-border cooperation between Austria-Bavaria and Alpenrhein-Bodensee-Hochrhein and the trans-national ETC programmes Alpine Region and Central Europe.

On 23 July, the European Commission presented its Sixth Report on Economic, Social and Territorial Cohesion that dealt with the impact of cohesion policy with respect to growth and development and the reduction of economic disparities between regions within the EU. Conclusions on this report were adopted by the General Affairs Council (Cohesion) on 19 November.

2.5.2. Internal Market, free Movement of Goods, Industry and Tourism

2.5.2.1. Internal Market and free Movement of Goods

The single market is an integral element of the EU. Its primary goal is the creation of an economic area without internal frontiers within which goods, capital, persons and services may move freely. According to calculations carried out by the European Commission, the completion of the single market would translate in an annual increase of the EU gross domestic product by approximately 0.2–0.4 % (calculated for a ten year period) and also have a positive impact on employment and the EU’s competitiveness compared with other economic areas.

The past few years have seen a range of efforts within the EU towards adding momentum to the completion of the single market. The goal was primarily to identify and dismantle remaining obstacles. In April 2011, the European Commission thus presented the Single Market Act I (SMA I), which includes twelve levers or key actions. In October 2012, the Single Market Act II (SMA II) was published. It provides for a further twelve key actions and proposals for legislative actions aimed at further deepening the internal market.

As mandated by the European Council, all key actions proposed in the two Single Market Acts were to be adopted and to some extent also implemented by the end of the year. All legal actions covered by the SMA I were adopted
by the Council. All legal actions covered by the SMA II were at least submitted by the Commission and some of them have in fact already been adopted by the Council. With a view to making full use of the potential offered by the internal market, the new public procurement rules including electronic invoicing in public procurement, the revised Directive on the recognition of professional qualifications, the facilitation of activities by cross-border venture capital funds and the new unitary patent protection in the EU accompanied by a single specialised jurisdiction, are of particular importance for Austria’s economy.

In 2015, the European Commission will present a new Single Market Strategy and a Digital Single Market package. In mid-2015 it will also publish a report on remaining obstacles to cross-border movement of goods and services.

The **REFIT programme** (Regulatory Fitness and Performance Programme) launched by the Commission at the end of 2012 is part of the already established horizontal smart regulation policy. Based on REFIT, the European Commission examines the entire acquis for administrative burdens, inconsistencies, gaps or inefficient measures and has determined potential corrective actions. Under this programme, entire areas of law and all associated legal acts are subjected to comprehensive evaluation and assessment. Furthermore, under the “ABR Plus” programme, the Commission cooperates closely with the Member States in order to improve procedures and reduce regulatory costs. In June, the Commission submitted a report on the implementation status of REFIT and started consultations on updating its impact assessment guidelines. The importance of better regulation is supported by the fact that the relevant commissioner, Frans Timmermans, is also First Vice-President of the European Commission. Furthermore, former Bavarian Prime Minister Edmund Stoiber was appointed Special Adviser on Better Regulation. In this function he will advise in particular on ways to cut red tape and reduce administrative burdens for small and medium-sized enterprises (**SMEs**) to boost jobs, growth and investments in the EU.

The objective pursued by the **Smart Regulation agenda** is to create a regulatory framework that is as simple as possible - clear, stable and predictable. The Member States are invited to design new legislative proposals in a manner that enables guaranteeing low-cost, efficient and transparent implementation and application. Existing legislation is screened for potential inefficiencies and obsolete regulations are to be deleted. The strategy’s core elements include impact assessment, stakeholder consultations and ex-post evaluations of legislative measures.

All legislative proposals made by the European Commission are to be subjected to impact assessments whose quality shall be scrutinised by the Impact Assessment Board (**IAB**, at the Commission’s Secretariat-General). The impact assessments are also to be updated in the event of significant changes based on negotiations in the Council. A dedicated unit was already set up some time ago at the European Parliament (**EP**).
The **Professional Qualifications Directive 2005/36/EC** was modernised and amended by Directive 2013/55/EU which entered into force on 17 January and has to be implemented within two years. The modernisation aims to further promote and increase mobility in the single market. Key amendments included in the directive relate to the gradual introduction of a European Professional Card (initially for physiotherapists, nursing staff and mountain guides), transparency and the justification of regulated professions, more online information and e-government for citizens as well as new forms of automatic recognition. The directive’s scope covers access to regulated professions (professions with legally binding qualification requirements) based on vocational training undertaken in another Member State. The directive was transposed in Austria in a decentralised manner in the individual vocational laws. Every vocational law thus also governs the recognition procedures for vocational training undertaken in other EU and EEA Member States.

The **Digital Agenda** is one of the priorities of the Latvian Council Presidency. The Digital Agenda for Europe focuses on sustainable economic and social benefits and is also one of the seven flagship initiatives of the Europe 2020 Strategy. In its Conclusions of 18 December, the European Council called on the EP and the Council to give new momentum to work on the pending proposals regarding the **Digital Single Market**. It also called on the Commission to submit an ambitious communication on the Digital Single Market in this area well in advance of the June 2015 European Council.

The package of new directives aimed at a major overhaul of public procurement rules in the EU was published on 28 March in the Official Journal of the EU (Directive 2014/24/EU on public procurement; Directive 2014/25/EU on procurement by entities operating in the water, energy, transport and postal services sectors; Directive 2014/23/EU on the award of concession contracts). The package entered into force on 18 April and is to be transposed by the Member States by 18 April 2016. In Austria, this process is led by the Constitutional Service of the Federal Chancellery in close coordination between federal government and the federal provinces and by involving all other relevant stakeholders. The three new directives replace the current procurement directives and provide for simplification and greater flexibility in public procurement. They provide public authorities with the opportunity to promote common social goals and ensure inclusion of social, ecological and innovative aspects. Noteworthy in this context is the obligation to handle procurement procedures electronically. Other important objectives pursued by the new directives are improved access of SMEs to procurement procedures and promotion of their participation in tender procedures.

On 6 May, Directive 2014/55/EU on **electronic invoicing in public procurement** was published in the Official Journal of the EU. This directive essentially requires public authorities to accept invoices in a special electronic data format which is to be developed by the European Committee for Standardization (CEN).
In the field of the **protection of intellectual property and industrial property rights**, the discussions on the comprehensive proposals submitted by the European Commission that had been launched in spring 2013, were continued intensively under the Greek and the Italian Council Presidencies. Deliberations focused on the revision of the European trade mark system (trade mark package) and more specifically on a revision of the Trade Marks Harmonisation Directive and changes to the Regulation of the Community trade mark and to the Regulation on the fees payable to the Office for Harmonisation in the Internal Market. Based on compromises reached on the texts, the Council Presidency was given the mandate in July to start informal discussions with the EP. In spite of clear progress made in terms of convergence of positions on essential questions (goods on route, seizure of very small consignments, governance of the Office for Harmonization in the Internal Market, compensation mechanisms), a trilogue meeting scheduled for December had to be postponed. Directive 2014/26/EU of the EP and the Council of 26 February on collective rights management and multi-territorial licencing of rights in **musical works** for online use in the Single Market entered into force on 9 April.

Negotiations on the **reform of the patent system** focus on a package consisting of two Regulations on the European patent with unitary effect (EU patent) and an international agreement on a Unified Patent Court. The prerequisite for the entry into force of the three legislative acts is ratification of the Unified Patent Court agreement by 13 Member States – including especially Germany, the United Kingdom and France. Austria was the first Member State to have ratified the agreement, followed in the course of the year by five further Member States including France. Following the entry into effect of the reform package it should thus be possible to register the first patents with unitary effect by the end of 2015/beginning of 2016. The underlying objective is to reduce costs for patent registration thus facilitating access to the patent system, in particular for SMEs.

### 2.5.2.2. European Industrial Policy

Since the beginning of the economic crisis there have been ongoing efforts at European level towards **developing an integrated European industrial policy**. In 2010, the Commission thus published a Communication on “An integrated industrial policy for the globalisation era – putting competitiveness and sustainability at centre stage”, which is at the same time one of the flagship initiatives of the Europe 2020 Strategy.

In 2012, the Commission adopted an update of the **Industrial Policy flagship initiative** – “A stronger European Industry for Growth and Economic Recovery”. This updated version provides for horizontal measures aimed at accelerating economic recovery as well as promoting growth and employment in the EU. The initiative strives to strengthen Europe’s industrial competitive-
ness and facilitate the transition to a sustainable, low-carbon and resource-efficient economy. Key activities relate to promotion of investment in innovative and new technologies, the creation of an environment that enables enterprises to capitalise on the opportunities offered by the European single market and the international markets, improved access to funding, increased investment in education, training and skills. The EU is to provide the necessary framework conditions in order to stimulate new investment, accelerate the introduction of new technologies and enhance resource efficiency. In a first step, six priority action lines (markets for advanced manufacturing technologies for clean production, sustainable industrial and construction policy and sustainable use of raw materials, clean vehicles, markets for bio-based products, markets for key enabling technologies, smart grids) were identified as areas requiring immediate action.

At the beginning of the year, the European Commission presented the Communication “For a European Industrial Renaissance”, which has a horizontal focus and addresses topics such as financing, regulatory framework, research and development as well as climate and energy policy. This approach was confirmed at the European Council in spring. An industrial roadmap originally announced for the European Council in March 2015 was later withdrawn. In the first six months of 2015, the Latvian Council Presidency plans to focus specifically on the topic of digitising the industry.

In its Communication on the “Small Business Act” (SBA), adopted in 2008, the European Commission for the first time defined a comprehensive framework for the European SME policy. The plan strives to facilitate SMEs’ access to funding and markets and promote entrepreneurial action. Especially noteworthy in this context are the “Programme for the competitiveness of enterprises and small and medium-sized enterprises” (COSME) covering the period from 2014 to 2020 and involving a budget of approximately 2.3 billion euros, and the “Green Action Plan” aimed at enabling better identification of business opportunities in the environmental sector. The SBA is being constantly updated in order to place a stronger emphasis on SMEs. Based on a joint initiative launched by Austria and Germany, training and skills are to be included as priority areas in the SBA. In connection with the SBA principle of “promoting the upgrading of skills in SMEs and all forms of innovation”, there is also a focus on the topic of digitising. Based on the outcome of an online consultation process, the European Commission plans to propose a new SBA in the first half of 2015 which will put the main focus on “promoting entrepreneurship” and “training and skills” (taking special account of dual education and training). With a view to translating the principle of “entrepreneurial initiative” into practice, measures aimed at specifically promoting young entrepreneurship, self-employment and the relevant spirit and skills have been fostered. Numerous initiatives aimed at reducing the administrative burden for enterprises have also been launched. A detailed presentation of the measures and actions taken at national level is provided.
in the Austrian SMA implementation report, the “Mittelstandsbericht 2014” (Report on the Situation of SMEs in Austria 2014).

2.5.2.3. Tourism

The tourism sector is of enormous national economic importance. Based on a communication on the topic of tourism presented by the European Commission in 2010, measures have been launched aimed at promoting this sector. They relate inter alia to stimulating competitiveness in the European tourism sector, promoting the development of sustainable, responsible and high-quality tourism, the consolidation of the image and profile of Europe as a collection of sustainable and high-quality destinations, and maximising the potential of EU financial policies and instruments for developing tourism. The measures taken towards implementing these priorities in 2014 included activities aimed at promoting data quality, the level of information and knowledge, framework conditions and networking. In practical terms this included studies on tourism development, demand behaviour and on the potential of accessible tourism and a new Virtual Tourism Monitoring Centre. Measures aimed at enhanced cross-border cooperation were also launched (such as European Routes of Culture, macro areas, the EDEN project aimed at promoting sustainable tourism development models across Europe, accessibility in tourism, senior citizens’ and youth tourism, the tourism indicator system ETIS for the sustainable management of tourism destinations, advertising Europe as a destination).


2.5.3. Free Movement of People, Services and Capital

The Services Directive 2006/123/EC (SD) liberalises the cross-border provision of services and the freedom of establishment. In June 2012, based on a conservative estimate, the EC assumes that the EU gross domestic product will increase by 0.8 per cent as a result of the directive’s transposition. According to its estimates, an increase of 1.6 per cent in EU GDP would be possible on top of that if all Member States lifted all restrictions on cross-border movement of services. The implementation of the SD is the topic of regular expert meetings at EU level. In the last few years, discussions focused on certain requirements under Article 15 of the SD which in Austria particularly affect veterinaries, patent lawyers and architects. Austria does well in the field of Mutual Administrative Assistance by way of the Internal Market Information System. In this context, particular attention is attached to the
“Points of Single Contact” (PCSs) established as service points in each Member State.

Furthermore, a network of advisory service centres was established under SOLVIT that aims to solve problems encountered by citizens and businesses in the internal market as quickly and effectively as possible without the need for legal action. The Austrian SOLVIT centre is based at the Federal Ministry of Science, Research and Economy.

2.5.4. Competition, Tax Issues and Harmonisation of National Laws

Further development of the EU state aid rules based on Articles 106 to 109 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU) is largely the responsibility of the Commission. It regularly invites EU Member States to participate in consultative meetings, issue statements and contribute to further developing the state aid acquis. The publication of the Communication of the Commission on EU state aid modernisation launched a comprehensive reform involving the revision of numerous regulations and guidelines. New environmental and energy state aid guidelines as well as a new community framework for research, development and innovation aid entered into force on 1 July. On the same day, the General Block Exemption Regulation entered into force which facilitates notification requirements and extends exemption provisions to also include state aid for sports and culture etc. New guidelines on state aid to promote risk finance investment seek to facilitate access to funding in an early development especially for SMEs. The revised guidelines on state aid for rescuing and restructuring non-financial undertakings in difficulty provide for stricter rules and better filters.

As regards tax matters, the European Council of 20 and 21 March called for ensuring that by the end of 2014 EU legislation be fully adapted in line with the new global standard for automatic exchange of information developed by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and endorsed by the G20. Consequently, the EU Council adopted the revised Savings Taxation Directive on 24 March and the Directive on administrative cooperation in the field of direct taxation on 9 December. On 4 March, the European Commission submitted a report on the status of negotiations on a savings taxation agreement with the third countries Andorra, Liechtenstein, Monaco, San Marino and Switzerland. The EU Council of 20 and 21 March welcomed the report and called upon these countries to fully commit themselves to implementing the OECD standard. Over the course of the year, these five states indeed committed themselves to applying the standard from 2017 and 2018 onwards.

The objective of the planned Financial Transaction Tax (FTT) is on the one hand to make the financial sector pay a fair share in the cost of crisis management and on the other hand to increase the stability of the financial markets.
through higher taxation of highly speculative transactions. As agreement on FTT at the level of all EU Member States based on the Commission proposal of September 2011 was not possible, 11 EU Member States (Austria, Germany, France, Belgium, Greece, Portugal, Slovenia, Estonia, Spain, Italy, Slovakia) declared at the ECOFIN meeting in Luxembourg on 9 October that they were ready to support the introduction of FTT by way of “enhanced cooperation”, the design of which was further discussed in 2014.

2.5.5. Employment and Social Policy

The relevant activities were marked by the continuation of enhanced cooperation in the context of the European Semester towards implementing the Europe 2020 Strategy. Special emphasis was placed on the fight against youth unemployment. The Union seeks to improve the current situation by making available additional funding for the European youth employment initiative and by way of the youth training guarantee.

With respect to the negotiations on the Multiannual Financial Framework 2014–2020 the following topics are particularly noteworthy: the adoption of the budget lines supporting the objectives of the Europe 2020 Strategy, the Structural Fund programmes (the European Social Fund in particular), the European Globalisation Fund and the Programme for Employment and Social Innovation. The Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived (FEAD) was launched in the social sector.

In the field of EU Labour Law several important legislative projects, including the Directive on improving the portability of supplementary pension rights, the Enforcement Directive on the Posting of Workers Directive, and the Directive on measures facilitating the exercise of rights conferred on workers in the context of freedom of movement of workers were adopted. A Council recommendation on a quality framework for traineeships was also adopted. Political agreement was reached in October on the proposal for a decision on establishing a European Platform to enhance cooperation in the prevention and deterrence of undeclared work.

In the field of health and safety at work, the Directive amending five EU Directives on health and safety at work as a result of the adoption of Regulation (EC) No. 1272/2008 on the classification, labelling and packaging of substances and mixtures entered into force.

The Fourth Annual Convention of the European Platform against Poverty and Social Exclusion was held in Brussels from 20 to 21 November.

2.5.6. Agriculture and Fisheries

Topics of major importance in the field of agriculture included in particular the implementation of the reform of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP)
and the Russian ban on the import of certain agricultural commodities from the EU. Further important issues were the development of a joint framework to improve the effectiveness of EU school schemes under the CAP, the proposal for a new Organic Regulation, the future of the dairy sector and the new EU Forest Strategy.

The amendment to the Common Market Regulation (CMR) adopted in June paved the way for the implementation of the reform of the CAP from 2013. Crop rotation requirements, areas designated as ecological focus areas and maintenance of permanent pasture were also included in the direct payment system. Regional disparities should be reduced and more equitable distribution of payments ensured across and within Member States. The goal is to achieve a national single area payment in all Member States from 2019 onwards.

The Russian Federation imposed a ban on the import of agricultural commodities, foodstuffs and raw material from all EU Member States, the USA and Canada, Australia and Norway effective as of 7 August. In response, the European Commission launched special support measures in the fruit and vegetable sector as well as for milk, skimmed milk powder and cheese in order to contribute towards market stabilisation. In this context, attention should be drawn to the Austrian “Exportinitiative-neu” (export initiative new), developed to facilitate opening up and tapping into further export markets with a view to diversifying Austrian export destinations and make exports more stable and less vulnerable to economic crisis.

In the fisheries sector, the review of the technical measures and control regulations (“omnibus regulation”) aimed at implementing the landing obligation – to be introduced gradually from 1 January 2015 onwards as a result of the reform of the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) – was a major issue that could not be concluded by the end of the year.

On 14 May, the European Commission submitted a draft proposing a new regulation banning drift net fishing. Deliberations were still ongoing by the end of the year. Another topic that was subject to negotiations was a proposal for a regulation on deep sea fishing in the North East Atlantic, which provides for a ban on the use of bottom trawls and deep sea bottom-set gillnets. These discussions will be continued in 2015.

Regarding the Multiannual Management Plans, the inter-institutional Task Force completed its work and submitted a final report plus recommendations on 2 April. Due to diverging positions held by the Council, the European Commission and the European Parliament regarding the applicable legal basis, some of these plans have been blocked since 2010.

Another priority was the start of negotiations on Fisheries Partnership Agreements between the EU and third countries and/or the adoption of agreements that have already been negotiated inter alia with Kiribati, Senegal, Cabo Verde and Mozambique.
On 11 July, a proposal for a regulation on the implementation into Union law of the recommendations on sustainable fisheries submitted by the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM) – an international fisheries organisation – was submitted. The relevant works will be continued in 2015.

In the context of the EU’s Integrated Maritime Policy (IMP), Directive 2014/89/EU of the European Parliament and the Council establishing a framework for the Member States’ maritime spatial planning was adopted.

The Council furthermore adopted the EU Maritime Security Strategy including the related action plan. In the IMP Council Conclusions it highlighted what has already been achieved and future developments required under the Maritime Agenda for Growth and Employment.

### 2.5.7. Transport and Telecommunications

The Transport, Telecommunications and Energy Council met four times during the Greek (4 and 14 March, 5 and 6 as well as 13 June) and the Italian Presidency (8 October, 27 November, 3 and 9 December), respectively.

In the field of rail transport, works towards the establishment of a European rail internal market were continued. In March, the Council defined its position on a draft regulation, which establishes the joint undertaking “Shift2Rail” (S2R), a public-private partnership that aims to support the development of better rail transport services in Europe.

In June, political agreement was reached on the technical pillar of the Fourth Railway Package, which includes draft directives on the interoperability of the rail system and on European railway safety, and a draft regulation on the European Railway Agency (ERA). With respect to the “political” or “market” pillar, political agreement was reached in December regarding a regulation on the normalisation of railway undertakings’ accounts. The other aspects of this pillar, the opening of markets and regulations regarding the managing structures of infrastructure operators remained under discussion.

Regarding aviation, in January the Council reached an agreement with the European Parliament on a draft regulation on noise-related operating restrictions at EU airports, which forms part of the Airport Package. The Council also adopted a Regulation on the reporting, analysis and follow-up of occurrences in civil aviation. Following Croatia’s accession to the EU, the Council adopted three decisions that enable Croatia to participate in a number of air transport agreements between the EU and third countries. In December, the Council achieved a general orientation on two draft regulations of the “Single European Sky 2+” Package: the regulation on the realisation of a single European sky and the regulation adapting the provisions on the European Aviation Safety Agency (EASA).

In the field of road transport, the Council reached political agreement on a proposal by the European Commission on the maximum authorised dimen-
sions of certain vehicles in national and international traffic and maximum authorised weights in international traffic. In December, agreement on this topic was also reached with the EP in a second reading. From the Austrian point of view it was important that cross-border use of road vehicles exceeding the maximum authorised dimensions (longer and heavier vehicles (LHVs) or “gigaliners”) will not be permitted. In October, the Council adopted a general approach on a draft directive on the cross-border exchange of information on road safety related traffic offences.

In the field of navigation, the Council – in view of the forthcoming mid-term review of the EU’s maritime transport policy by the European Commission – adopted in June a conclusion on the “mid-term review of the maritime transport policy until 2018 and outlook until 2020”. In October, it agreed on a general approach on a draft regulation on market access to port services and the financial transparency of ports. In December, the Council agreed on a decision enabling Member States to join the International Convention on Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping for Fishing Vessel Personnel (STCW-F Convention).

In the field of telecommunications, the Council took note of one status report each on a draft directive aimed at ensuring a high common level of security of electronic telecommunication networks and information systems across the EU and on the status of negotiations on the Telecommunications Single Market Package (measures towards a European single market for electronic communication and the realisation of the Connected Continent Package). Work on a regulation to amend the EU’s legal framework for telecommunication as part of the package towards realising the “Connected Continent” increasingly shifted towards the fields of roaming and network neutrality. In November, the Council adopted Conclusions on the topic of Internet Governance, in which it stressed its support for a “multi-stakeholder model“.

With a view to the mid-term review of the Europe 2020 growth strategy in 2015, the Council adopted Conclusions on transport infrastructure and the Trans-European Transport Network (TEN-T), which highlight the importance of investments in a comprehensive and efficient transport infrastructure network.

2.5.8. Environment

Environmental policy is one of the EU’s major policy areas which – as a cross-cutting issue – also influences other EU policies. Due to the ongoing expansion of environmental policy activities at EU level, there is a dense network of European environmental legislation in place that covers all aspects of environmental protection (including air and atmosphere, water, waste, biodiversity and chemicals). The Environment Council, which holds four formal and two informal annual meetings, deals both with current and long-term EU environmental and climate issues.
In March, the Environment Council held an orientation debate on the Communication from the European Commission on a policy framework for climate and energy 2020–2030. In its communication, the Commission inter alia proposes a binding greenhouse gas emissions reduction target of 40 % below 1990 levels and a renewable energy target of at least 27 % by 2030. The communication was accompanied by a legislative proposal for a stability reserve in EU emissions trading and a report on the prices and costs of energy in Europe. The aim of the market stability reserve provided for in the reform of the EU emissions trading system from 2021 onwards is to enable automatic adjustment of emission certificates to be auctioned. The role to be played by the topic of energy efficiency, which is relevant for the 2030 framework, is to be defined following review of the implementation of the Energy Efficiency Directive.

Also in March, Ministers held an exchange of views on Greening the European Semester. The goal pursued under the heading of greening consists not only of taking economic and social policy measures but also of environmental measures aimed at promoting the EU’s sustainable economic recovery and development: mere quantitative growth is to be replaced by a new quality-based approach, stressing all dimensions (sustainable, smart, integrative) of growth. As far as possible, from 2014 onwards this approach is to be increasingly integrated into the Commission’s country-specific recommendations. The Environment Council not only discussed existing bottlenecks, but also the potential of measures in the field of resource efficiency and climate change.

For information on the amendment of Directive 2001/18/EC regarding the possibility for Member States to restrict or prohibit cultivation in all or part of their territory of genetically modified organisms that have been authorised at EU level, please see 2.5.11.

In June, the Environment Council again discussed the 2020–2030 framework for climate and energy policy. With a view to the 2015 Climate Conference in Paris, when a new international climate change agreement is sought to be reached, the European Commission issued a call to agree by the end of 2014 on the 40 % reduction target and on burden sharing with respect to areas not covered by (EU) emission trading. Although many Member States highlighted the need for this 40 % reduction of greenhouse gases by 2030 with respect to 1990, the Environment Council left it to the European Council in October to decide on this issue in preparation for Climate Change Conferences in Lima 2014 and Paris 2015.

An orientation debate was held on the “Clean Air” Policy Package, submitted by the Commission in December 2013. The package includes a comprehensive Clean Air Programme for Europe involving proposals for a Directive on the limitation of emissions of certain pollutants into the air from medium combustion plants (MCP Directive) and on the revision of a Directive on the reduction in national emissions of certain atmospheric pollutants (NEC
Austria in the European Union

Directive). Most Member States welcomed the closing of the gap in regulations to be achieved by the MCP Directive as well as its scope, although further differentiation in the limitation of emissions was deemed necessary depending on the size of the combustion plants. With respect to the NEC Directive, Member States highlighted the need for further analysis and modelling with respect to the targets proposed for 2030.

Ahead of the conferences on the Convention on Biological Diversity in Pyeongchang (Republic of Korea) in October, the Environment Council outlined in its Conclusions the approach to be adopted by the EU.

Information was also shared on the results of surveys on endocrine disruptors in the environment and in the human body and on the need for an EU Action Plan on highly fluorinated substances.

In October, the Environment Council presented its contribution towards an assessment and review of the Europe 2020 Strategy in its Conclusions on the Greening of the European Semester and the Europe 2020 Strategy Mid-term Review. It particularly highlighted the business opportunities the acceleration of the transition towards a circular, low-carbon and climate-resilient economy held in store for the EU Member States, the employment creation potential from the “green economy” through inclusion of sustainable business areas and “green jobs” as well as the integration of resource efficiency in the current climate and energy targets of the Europe 2020 Strategy. It also dealt with the possible implementation of an indicator for measuring progress towards resource efficiency, the enhanced implementation and integration of green skills, employment and growth in the governance structure of the European Semester.

In an orientation debate on the waste package submitted by the European Commission in July, the majority of Member States welcomed its general orientation, especially the target of restricting the volume of deposited waste and the introduction of separate collection of organic waste. The waste package is intended to act as an important driver for promoting resource efficiency and a circular economy in the EU. In order to increase the value assigned to waste as a resource, quantitative targets for recycling and re-use ratios are to be raised in the respective directives and there is to be a gradual introduction of bans on burying recyclable waste in landfills. Furthermore, the respective directives are to be better aligned in order to avoid overlaps. New standardised methods are to be used to identify and calculate the relevant targets.

The EU position for the 20th session of the Conference of the Parties to the United National Framework Convention on Climate Change and the 10th session of the Meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol in Lima in December 2014 were laid down in the Conclusions adopted by the Environment Council. These include the core elements of a draft negotiating text for the 2015 World Climate Agreement, requirements regarding the type and scope
of information to be provided on the intended nationally determined contributions the Parties are to submit in the first quarter of 2015 and to the process for the communication and subsequent consideration and analysis of these contributions prior to the 2015 conference. In this context, account had to be taken of the high expectations developing countries have regarding adaptation to climate change and the international funding of international climate measures.

Information was also provided about the European Week for Sustainable Development. Based on an initiative launched by Germany, France and Austria, up-coming national action weeks will be held during the same period in May 2015. In September, the Czech Republic provided information on the adoption of a Protocol on Sustainable Transport in the Carpathians to the Framework Convention on the Protection and Sustainable Development of the Carpathians.

In December, the Environment Council succeeded in reaching two political agreements, the first on a draft directive to reduce the use of lightweight plastic bags, which calls upon Member States to take measures against the consumption of lightweight plastic bags. The goal is to reduce the annual use of these bags to an average of 90 per person by the end of 2019 and to 40 bags per person by the end of 2025 or to introduce a charge on single-use plastic bags. Very thin plastic bags will be excluded for purposes of food hygiene. With an annual use of some 50 plastic bags per person, Austria already meets the target for 2019. The second political agreement reached related to a proposal for a regulation on the monitoring, reporting and verification of carbon dioxide emissions from ships. Although Austria, a landlocked country, does not have any seagoing vessels it is nevertheless indirectly affected by the regulation.

The Council reached a general approach on a draft directive to limit emissions of certain pollutants into the air from medium combustion plants. Some Member States, however, criticised the approach’s low level of ambition, emphasizing that strict environmental standards did not represent an obstacle to the EU’s competitiveness and that this was quite to the contrary. A number of Member States called for retaining the Clean Air Policy Package in the Commission’s work programme for 2015.

Furthermore, an exchange of views on an interdisciplinary and change effecting post-2015 agenda, which is to be considered in the context of the post-2015 agenda under negotiation at the international level, was held. The Conclusions on the Post-2015 Agenda adopted by the General Affairs Council in December particularly emphasize the connections between global environmental and economic aspects.

In view of the ongoing negotiations, a large majority of Member States criticised the withdrawal of the proposal on the waste package from the Commission’s work programme for 2015 and underlined the important role
played by the package in creating green jobs, increasing resource efficiency and reducing the EU’s dependency on raw material imports. The Commission announced the presentation of a new ambitious proposal on the circular economy for 2015.

On the topic of chemical policy on the road to a cleaner environment, some Member States, including Austria, raised concerns regarding further development especially with regard to the REACH Regulation. Austria, supported by Belgium, the Netherlands and Sweden, raised concerns about environmental pollution caused by microplastics, i.e. microscopically small plastic particles that accumulate in water systems. These particles derive from granulates used in cosmetic products or detergents where they are added to enhance cleaning performance. As regards such products, the EU currently relies on voluntary bans which might, however, not be enough. Calls for a debate on an EU-wide ban on microplastics were thus made.

2.5.9. Energy and Trans-European Networks

European energy policy, which is based on supply security, economic efficiency and sustainability, plays a pivotal role in achieving numerous further EU core targets, such as competitive economy, intelligent, integrative and sustainable growth, the creation of jobs, climate and environmental protection as well as the provision of support to the national economies of developing countries.

The swift and comprehensive completion of the internal energy market and the connection of energy islands to the European electricity and gas networks by 2015 are considered important milestones in this context. In 2014, in order to reach this goal, there was a special focus on expediting the full transposition and/or application of the Third Internal Market Energy Package and other relevant legislation, and the adoption and implementation of outstanding network codes and activities with respect to the end user market (fostering the role and rights of consumers, energy poverty, development and use of the necessary technologies). In October, the European Commission published a communication on progress made towards completion of the internal energy market.

Continued major investment in energy infrastructure is necessary in order to achieve these milestones and for meeting energy policy targets in general. Three instruments have been set up with a view to promoting such investments: the regulation on guidelines for trans-European energy infrastructure (TEN-E Regulation) providing the legal framework inter alia for preparing a List of Projects of Common Interest (PCIs) that may be financed via the Connecting Europe Facility (CEF). The TEN-E Regulation enables preferential treatment and simplified as well as accelerated permit-granting procedures within the scope of national legislative provisions while at the same time strengthening the opportunities for public participation and environmental
In this context, the relevant provisions for the maximum duration of such procedures must be observed. In Austria, the Federal Ministry for Science, Research and Economy was designated national competent authority and entrusted with facilitating and co-ordinating the PCI permitting process. Under the CEF, funding is provided for infrastructure development projects in the fields of transport, telecommunication and energy. In the funding period 2014–2020, total project funding under this facility amounts to 5.85 billion euro. Classification as a PCI is a prerequisite for access to CEF funding, but is, however, not a guarantee for the granting of such funding. In October 2013, the European Commission adopted a first list of PCIs, which also includes 18 projects related to Austria. On 21 November, the Commission awarded funding of 647 million euros to important energy infrastructure projects. This money was allocated to 34 actions chosen via a selection procedure. The selection process for the second PCI list to be adopted at the end of 2015 is currently ongoing.

Another thematic priority set out in the Energy Infrastructure Regulation is the introduction of smart grids technologies across the EU, which shall inter alia enable the integration of large volumes of electricity from renewable and/or decentralised energy sources into electricity networks. Digital two-way communication in real-time enables interactive and smart monitoring of electricity production, distribution and consumption in smart grids. This can ensure provision of an economical, efficient and sustainable electricity system that boasts low power losses as well as high quality and supply security. For Austrian technology suppliers, smart grids and the related technologies provide an opportunity to succeed on the world market. Austria may thus come to serve as an example for successful innovation policy in the field of modern infrastructure and energy systems.

In order to stimulate investment in the energy and environmental sector and to prevent fragmentation of the internal market due to differing subsidies and funding regimes, the European Commission revised the state aid rules. On 5 November 2013, it thus submitted its Market Intervention Package entitled “delivering the internal electricity market and making the most of public intervention”, which consisted of a Communication on making the most of public intervention, guidance on production-side interventions (capacity mechanism), guidance on incorporating demand-side flexibility in electricity markets, guidance on the promotion of renewable energies and guidance on the use of renewable energy cooperation mechanisms. Use of renewable energy cooperation mechanisms, for instance, enables more efficient attainment of the European climate and energy targets, as Member States with a lower renewables potential may use other Member States’ excess potential. The Commission Guidelines on environmental and energy aid were also prepared based on the Market Intervention Package. Adopted by the Commission in April, the guidelines provide for the gradual introduction of market-oriented mechanisms with respect to funding systems and the gradual harmonisation of the Member States’ funding systems.
Investment also requires a reliable, clear and long-term legal framework. To this end, the European Council adopted the 2030 Framework for Climate and Energy Policies, which defines the relevant conditions. The binding EU target thus set is a share of at least 27 % of renewable energy consumption by 2030. In order to improve energy efficiency at EU level, an indicative target of at least 27 % is defined although a review to be conducted by 2020 could, however, result in this target being raised to 30 %. Furthermore, a 15 % inter-connection target was adopted for electricity grids. Austria will continue its efforts towards ensuring that all Member States contribute appropriately to reaching the renewables target. Austria will also contribute its share towards achieving the energy efficiency target. In this context, the focus should, however, be placed on cost-efficient measures.

The issue of energy prices is being dealt with on two levels in the European energy policy debate: for households, lower energy prices mean important savings that contribute to an affordable standard of living; for enterprises that are active in energy-intensive sectors, lower energy prices mean enhanced competitiveness.

European Energy policy, however, also has an external component, which was further developed and strengthened in 2014 – not least in response to events in Ukraine.

The European Energy Security Strategy (EESS), submitted by the European Commission on 28 May, unites both components. On the one hand, it sets out immediate actions aimed at increasing the EU’s capacity to overcome any major disruption to electricity supply in winter 2014/2015 based on coordinated measures. In this context, a special focus is placed on vulnerable regions, on enhancing storage capacity, developing the reverse flow of gas supplies, security of supply plans and enhanced exploitation of liquefied natural gas (LNG). On the other hand, the strategy defines medium and long term actions aimed at improving energy efficiency, further developing the internal energy market, increasing energy production in the European Union and further developing energy technologies in order to reduce the Union’s dependency on particular fuels, energy suppliers and supply routes. October also saw the presentation of the results of the gas stress tests. The two scenarios simulated under these tests were a six-month disruption of gas imports along the Ukrainian transit route and a complete halt in Russian gas imports to the EU. Thanks to its high gas storage inventories and the substantial share of renewable energies in the national energy mix, Austria is well equipped to deal with supply disruptions of several months simulated in these stress tests.

Efforts towards establishing an Energy Union also focus on improving supply security, deepening integration of national energy markets, the reduction of energy demand and CO₂ emissions as well as promoting research and development in this sector. A Commission communication on these topics is expected in February 2015.
With a view to ensuring a reliable energy supply, the EU is working towards reducing its dependence on individual energy suppliers and supply routes, i.e. towards diversifying energy routes and sources. A core element of the relevant efforts is the Southern Corridor, as addressed in the Infrastructure Regulation, which is to supply the European market with natural gas from the Caspian region. In June 2013, the Shah-Deniz Consortium decided against the Nabucco West project, co-funded by the OMV and leading from Central Europe to Baumgarten, and in favour of the Trans-Adriatic Pipeline (TAP) leading from Greece to Italy. The transnational natural gas pipeline project South Stream, led by the Russian company Gazprom and leading from the Black Sea via Bulgaria, Serbia and Hungary to Slovenia, and the Austrian natural gas hub in Baumgarten (Lower Austria) can be considered as having been abandoned following announcements to this effect made by the Russian President in December.

The EU has moreover taken account of developments in the global energy landscape (the growing share of emerging countries is shaping global energy demand, the EU’s continuously increasing dependency on energy imports, issues related to climate, the environment and competitiveness, the volatile political situation in numerous exporting countries, the shale gas and oil boom in the USA as well as new suppliers in the Mediterranean and East Africa) by strengthening its international energy policy. In this context, the Union focuses especially on enhanced internal coordination and coherence, closer cooperation with third countries building on the internal energy market, deepening energy partnerships and supporting national economies in developing countries. In contacts with its partner countries and international organisations, the EU has thus been able to share and pass on successful policy approaches in the field of sustainable energy policies, promotion of renewable energies, energy efficiency, research and innovation as well as regulation. Key principles for transparent, competition-oriented and liquid energy markets were enshrined in bilateral agreements and multilateral legal frameworks. The Vienna-based Energy Community, the Energy Charter and Twinning projects, which have with Austrian involvement been very successful, are of particular relevance in this context.

### 2.5.10. Consumer Protection

The adoption of a Directive on a basic payment account marked a major step towards enhanced consumer protection. The Regulation on the 2014–2020 Consumer Programme defines the framework for funding measures in the field of EU consumer protection over the next seven years.

### 2.5.11. Healthcare

Legislative work in the healthcare sector is focused on the review of the regulatory framework for medicinal products and in-vitro diagnostic medical
devices. The two proposals for regulations are highly comprehensive and complex in terms of content as they directly affect citizens’ health and safety. Non-legislative activities focused especially on coordinating the response to the outbreak of Ebola and innovation in the healthcare sector with a view to ensuring sustainable development of healthcare systems.

In the field of veterinary science/consumer healthcare, negotiations were continued on a novel uniform animal health law, a new regulation on official controls performed along the food supply chain. Consultations on a proposal for a regulation by the EP and the Council on the production and labelling of organic products were started.

As early as 2008, the Commission had presented a proposal for a Regulation by the EP and the Council on novel foods, which was, however, not adopted due to lack of agreement especially with regard to the issue of cloning of animals for food production. Regarding the new proposal – submitted by the Commission in October 2013 – the Council was able to agree on a mandate for launching negotiations with the EP aimed at reaching agreement at the first reading.

Following intense negotiations, the Council and the EP were able to reach agreement on a Regulation regarding the possibility for Member States to restrict or prohibit the cultivation of genetically modified organisms in their territory (self-determination). This proposal by the Commission – with which President Barroso delivered on a political promise made in September – was essentially triggered by an initiative launched by Austria and the Netherlands and embraced by eleven further Member States.

2.5.12. Education and Youth

In the field of education, the Council adopted the Conclusions on Efficient and Innovative Education and Training to Invest in Skills – Supporting the 2014 European Semester at its February meeting. The focus is on promoting lifelong learning with a special emphasis on digital skills and learning methods and on exploiting the potential offered by new technologies.

In May, the Education Ministers’ Council adopted Conclusions on effective teacher education. In order to meet new challenges teachers too are to be provided with modern training and education as well as opportunities for continuous development and professional further training. Topics such as digital learning, entrepreneurship and creative thinking are thus also key in the teacher training context.

The Council furthermore adopted Conclusions on quality assurance supporting education and training. Quality assurance mechanisms are to be considered an important tool to be used by institutions and policymakers in order to assess and further develop education systems and enhance their levels of efficiency and effectiveness. The goal of quality assurance at Euro-
pean level is to ensure improved coordination while at the same time taking account of the differences and characteristics of the individual education sectors.

Also in May, the Council adopted Conclusions on multilingualism and the development of language competences, thus taking account of the importance of language skills in enhancing employability, mobility and fostering personal development.

At the November Council meeting, Conclusions on entrepreneurship in education and training were adopted. Entrepreneurial skills may foster employability and self-employment. The knowledge triangle integration between education, research and innovation enhances the teaching and learning process, stimulating creative thinking and innovative attitudes and approaches that often result in the creation of new ventures.

The central role of education was also emphasised in the context of the midterm review of the Europe 2020 Strategy. Austria supported retaining the core target of reducing the share of early school leavers and increasing the share of 30 to 34 year olds holding a university or equivalent degree. A holistic understanding of education and training as a lifelong, interrelated process has for a long term now formed the successful core element of European education policy.

Under Greek Council Presidency, the topic of social inclusion enjoyed priority in the youth area. Importance is being attached to promoting young people’s entrepreneurial spirit in order to enhance their employability. Non-formal learning experiences are also considered very relevant in this respect. The Italian Council Presidency made the topic of young people’s empowerment a central issue. Providing young people access to their rights in order to support their autonomy and participation in civil society was regarded as pivotal in this context. Key importance was attached to the role played by youth work and youth organisations in efforts towards achieving this goal. A cross-sectoral approach in the field of youth policy was identified as an essential measure towards managing socio-economic challenges.

The EU programme “Youth in Action” (2007–2013) was integrated as one of four thematic pillars in the new EU programme Erasmus+ (2014–2020 programme for education, training, youth and sport). The Youth in Action element of the programme has a budget of its own and is implemented in Austria via the national agency “Interkulturelles Zentrum” (intercultural centre). Further exploiting the potential of non-formal learning through the promotion of international youth mobility is one of the programme’s key priorities. Projects that may be eligible to receive funding range from youth seminars and youth exchange projects that are organised by young people and youth multipliers, to participation in the European Voluntary Service and projects that involve international cross-sectoral cooperation. In 2014, total funding available for projects submitted by Austrian applicants amounted to 3.5 mil-
lion euros, which was fully utilised. In 2013, some 275,000 individuals participated across Europe in the 12,100 projects under the Youth in Action programme, 51% of all projects enabled the inclusion of disadvantaged young people. Some 12,000 project participants did not come from the EU but from EU Neighbourhood Policy partner countries (43% from Eastern Europe and the Caucasus, 37% from the Western Balkans and South East Europe and 20% from Mediterranean countries).

On 1 January, the area of sport was integrated in the Erasmus+ programme, which in many respects marks a milestone for Austrian and European sport. This step is an expression of the appreciation of the important role sport plays in Europe, thus recognising the special features of sport, including its social, educational and health promoting functions. The provision of approximately 265 million euros for the period 2014–2020 guarantees the targeted promotion of grassroots sports activities and cooperation partnerships. This adds impetus to the drive to meet common European goals such as safeguarding integrity in sports as well as fighting match fixing, doping, intolerance and discrimination, promoting equal opportunities and fostering dual careers of athletes. Several cooperation partnerships Austria initiated in the field of sports were recognised as being eligible for funding by the European Commission.

2.5.13. Research, Technological Development and Outer Space

The key topic dealt with in the field of research and technological development was completion of the negotiations on HORIZON 2020 – The Framework Programme for Research and Innovation (2014–2020) and the start of its implementation by the Commission and in the Member States.

In summer 2013, the Commission presented four proposals for initiatives under Art. 185 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU) and five initiatives under Art. 187 TFEU. Due to co-funding under Horizon 2020 there is a connection between the framework programme and this Innovation Investment Package consisting of public-public partnerships and public-private partnerships. Both seek to contribute towards the establishment and/or deepening of the European Research Area and the implementation of the Innovation Union Strategy aimed at creating jobs and growth. After agreement had been reached with the EP in April, all legislative proposals were adopted in May.

The two Presidency countries Greece and Italy placed a clear emphasis on the project of the “Renewed Partnership for Research and Innovation in the Mediterranean Area” (PRIMA). The project essentially focuses on the main common challenges the Mediterranean region is facing relating for instance to food systems and water resources, energy, the environment, transport and health. There is comprehensive political consensus on cooperation in this strategic area and on building up a structured, long-term partnership.
The Second Progress Report on the European Research Area was discussed in September. Plans for elaborating an ERA Roadmap by mid-2015, which is to support Member States in developing and implementing their national policies in line with the key priorities of the European Research Area, are a key element.

In December, the new Commissioner for Research, Science and Innovation, Carlos Moedas, participated in a Council meeting. When asked by Member States about the new Investment Package proposed by the President of the Commission Jean-Claude Juncker, Commissioner Moedas stressed the leverage effect of the 2.7 billion euros invested to this end under the Horizon 2020 investment plan, which will enable research and innovation to contribute via innovative projects towards improving productivity in Europe.

2.5.14. Area of Freedom, Security and Justice

In view of the expiry of the Stockholm Programme, which had defined the framework for developing the area of freedom, security and justice, at the end of 2014, the European Council on 27 June defined the strategic guidelines for the coming years in this policy area. Concrete substantive priorities include: protection of fundamental rights including data protection whilst addressing security concerns, full transposition and effective implementation of the Common European Asylum System (CEAS) and further development of an efficient and well-managed asylum and border policy guided by the principles of solidarity and fair sharing of responsibility; optimising the benefits of legal migration as well as preventing and tackling irregular migration; combating serious and organised crime including terrorism; enhancing mutual trust in one another's justice systems; promoting consistency and clarity of EU legislation for EU citizens and businesses; simplified access to justice including inter alia the use of e-justice; strengthening the rights of accused and suspect persons in criminal proceedings; examining and facilitating the enforcement of judgements in family law, civil and commercial matters; reinforcing the protection of victims; enhancing mutual recognition of decisions in civil and commercial matters; establishing a European Public Prosecutor's Office.

At the end of November, in line with Protocol No 36 to the Treaty on the Functioning of the EU (TFEU), the transitional provisions for police and judicial cooperation in criminal matters, which had been adopted before the entry into force of the Treaty of Lisbon, expired. From 1 December onwards, the European Court of Justice and the European Commission may therefore fully exercise their powers also with respect to legal acts that were adopted under the formerly intergovernmental third pillar. The United Kingdom used the opportunity to “opt out” of these legal acts provided under Article 10 of this Protocol and declared its “re-opt-in” to 35 of these legal acts effective
Austria in the European Union

as of the same date, which was confirmed by the respective decision by the European Commission and the Council.

In 2014, the EU was faced with a substantial increase in refugee and migrant inflows with many individuals seeking access to Europe being exploited by people smugglers and traffickers often using life-threatening routes across the Mediterranean. EU activities therefore mainly focused on implementing and further developing measures to cope with this migration pressure. The most important lines of action had already been presented at the end of 2013 by a dedicated Task Force Mediterranean and subsequently confirmed by the Council and the European Council. These actions include intensified cooperation with countries of origin and transit countries, regional protection programmes, resettlement and reinforced legal avenues for entering Europe, fighting human trafficking, smuggling and organised crime, reinforced border surveillance aimed at protecting and saving the lives of migrants, as well as assistance to Member States dealing with high migration pressure.

Taking account of the experience gained in the course of the year in implementing these areas of action as well as external developments, the Justice and Home Affairs Council on 10 October adopted Conclusions on a strategic and operational approach to better manage migratory flows. The conclusions focus in particular on the importance of comprehensive cooperation with third countries in line with the Global Approach on Migration and Mobility (GAMM) and further strengthening of the Union’s agency for external border security FRONTEX and of measures to transpose and implement the Common European Asylum System (CEAS). All pertinent legal acts had already been adopted in 2013, their full implementation and transposition will, however, not be completed until mid-2015. Therefore the Commission on 26 June only submitted a supplementary legislative proposal aimed at amending Regulation (EU) No 604/2013 of 26 June 2013 (Dublin III Regulation) with respect to unaccompanied minors seeking international protection on which the relevant legislative procedure had not been completed by the end of the year. Priority was attached to the need for effective implementation of CEAS by all Member States. Against the background of the increasing number of tragic incidents involving boat migrants in the Mediterranean, concepts aimed at enabling safe avenues to Europe for refugees who require protection while at the same time ensuring a more equitable and fairer distribution of asylum seekers and refugees across the EU Member States were discussed simultaneously in the EU bodies from the middle of the year on. In this context, Austria contributed a proposal for the “Save Lives” initiative to the EU discussion. The goal pursued by this initiative is to identify refugees requiring protection in cooperation with UNHCR outside of Europe, enabling them to enter Europe and be distributed according to a key which is based on objective criteria that take into consideration already existing burdens and efforts across EU Member States. Such a key could subsequently also be used for asylum seekers in general. This proposal by Austria triggered a discus-
sion on quotas within the EU. The European Commission envisaged a pilot project to be launched in 2015 allowing – initially on a voluntary basis – for the resettlement and quota-based distribution of refugees identified using this approach.

Regulation (EU) No 656/2014 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 15 May 2014 establishing rules for the surveillance of the external sea borders in the context of operational cooperation coordinated by the European Agency for the Management of Operational Cooperation at the External Borders of the Member States of the European Union entered into force on 17 June. This regulation inter alia clearly states that the surveillance of the EU’s external borders is committed to protecting and saving human lives and that “pushback” operations on the high seas are prohibited.

Under the operation “Triton”, launched on 1 November, FRONTEX has supported the surveillance of the Union’s maritime borders – including search and rescue operations – in the Central Mediterranean. In terms of timing, this operation is a follow-up to the Italian rescue operation “Mare Nostrum”, it does however not have the same scope or mandate.

Under the Global Approach to Migration and Mobility (GAMM), the EU has continued its cooperation and dialogue with third countries. In 2014, Joint Declarations establishing mobility partnerships were signed with Tunisia and Jordan. Individual Member States are entitled to join these partnerships on a voluntary basis. Austria has not signed these partnerships. Negotiations on a Common Agenda for Migration and Mobility (CAMM) with Nigeria were completed and the document will be signed at the beginning of 2015.

In the field of legal migration, Directive 2014/36/EU of 26 February 2014 on the conditions of entry and stay of third country nationals for the purpose of employment as seasonal workers entered into force on 28 March and has to be transposed by Member States by 30 September 2016. Directive 2014/66/EU of 15 May 2014 on the conditions of entry and residence of third-country nationals in the framework of intra-company transfer (ICT Directive) entered into force on 28 May and has to be transposed by Member States by 29 November 2016. On a proposal for a directive on entry and residence of students, researchers, pupils, remunerated and unremunerated trainees and au-pairs, which aims to improve the existing provisions in the field of admission and mobility of third-party nationals for the purposes of studies or scientific research, submitted by the Commission on 25 March 2013, the EP adopted its position in the first reading on 25 February. In the second half of the year a compromise on the proposed directive’s scope was reached at Council level and a mandate for launching negotiations with the EP was adopted, which also accommodates the concerns raised by Austria.

In April, the European Commission submitted a proposal for amending Regulation (EC) No 810/2009 of the EP and the Council of 13 July 2009 on establishing a Community Code on Visas. By the end of the year, discussions
in the first reading were still ongoing within the relevant Council working group.

On 28 April, the **visa waiver agreement between the EU and Moldova** entered into force. Readmission and visa facilitation agreements entered into force simultaneously on 1 January with Armenia and on 1 September with Azerbaijan. The signing of a **readmission agreement with Turkey** marked the launching of a visa dialogue. The goal of this dialogue is to open Turkey a long-term perspective – without any automatism – for visa exemption for Turkish nationals provided that Turkey fully complies with the relevant catalogue of criteria (roadmap), which specifically requires the effective implementation of the readmission agreement that entered into force on 1 October.

The **Smart Borders** package, submitted by the European Commission in 2013, which strives to better stem illegal migration and facilitate easier border-crossing for *bona fide* travellers, was subjected to an evaluation prior to continuation of the legislative process. This step was taken in response to concerns voiced, inter alia by Austria, regarding its technical feasibility and the expected costs. Both the technical study and a study on the related costs were completed in October. A pilot project on the package’s technical feasibility was thus scheduled for 2015 and will serve as the basis for revised legislative proposals to be submitted by the Commission.

In light of the phenomenon of foreign fighters in Syria and Iraq, which represents a major challenge to safety and security in Europe, particular attention was dedicated to the fight against terrorism. On 29 April, the EU Counter Terrorism Coordinator submitted his report which also outlines recommendations for action to the Council. At its meeting on 5 and 6 June, the Justice and Home Affairs Council adopted Conclusions on terrorism and border security as well as a revised **EU Strategy on Combating Radicalisation and Recruitment**. On 4 and 5 December, the Council adopted guidelines for implementing this strategy. With respect to external action, a Strategy Paper on Foreign Fighters in Iraq/Syria was endorsed by the Foreign Affairs Council on 20 October. Although the European Council had called in August for the completion of the legislative process on the proposal for a directive on the registration of air passenger name record data of inner-European flights for the prevention, detection, investigation and prosecution of terrorist offences and serious crime (**Passenger Name Record Directive/PNR Directive**) by the end of the year, concrete progress could not be achieved. The EP was not yet able to agree on a position as it first wanted to clarify the concrete impact of the judgement of the European Court of Justice on Data Retention (C-293/12) on the proposal on passenger name record retention.

In the context of two preliminary ruling proceedings, which were initiated inter alia by the Austrian Constitutional Court, the European Court of Justice (ECJ) in its judgement of 8 April declared the Data Retention Directive (Directive 2006/24 EC of 15 March 2006 on the retention of data generated or processed in connection with the provision of publicly available electronic com-
munications services or of public communications networks and amending Directive 2002/58/EC) invalid. This judgment triggered renewed debate on the added value and consistency with fundamental rights of data retention and other data storage projects. The Commission has since examined alternatives for further approaches – taking account of the fact that several supreme courts have not yet passed their judgements.

The EU Passenger Name Record Agreement with Canada was signed on 25 June. Prior to approving of its signing, the EP, however, submitted the agreement to the ECJ for appraisal. Further rounds of negotiation on the EU-US Data Protection Agreement were also held. However, on some very decisive issues, especially regarding individual legal protection for EU citizens, agreement was still outstanding by the end of the year.

In the field of police cooperation, the Justice and Home Affairs Council agreed at its meeting in June on a general approach on a new legal basis on Europol. The original proposal by the Commission had provided for the merger of Europol and the European Police College (Cepol), which a large majority of delegations opposed in the Council. Thus the European Commission presented a separate proposal for a regulation on a legal basis for Cepol. The relevant negotiations were launched in the second half of the year.

Negotiations regarding comprehensive reform of the EU data protection rules as proposed by the Commission on 25 January 2012 continued intensively but were, however, not completed. Regarding the Data Protection Regulation, generally aimed at replacing the Data Protection Directive 95/46/EC, and the Data Protection Directive, generally aimed at replacing Council Framework Decision 2008/977/JHA on the protection of personal data processed in the framework of police and judicial cooperation in criminal matters, the EP adopted its position in the first reading in spring. Consultations on the directive were held in parallel to those on the regulation. Many Member States, however, were in favour of waiting for the results of the consultations on the regulation in order to achieve the highest level of coherence possible between the two legal instruments. Despite repeated discussions it was not possible to reach a consensus, especially concerning distinction between the two instruments’ respective areas of application. At its meetings in June, October and December, the Justice and Home Affairs Council achieved partial general approaches on individual elements of the regulation. In its conclusions adopted in June, the European Council called for completion of the negotiations on the new legal framework on data protection in 2015. Austria is in principle in favour of a stronger union-wide harmonisation of legal provisions on data protection at a high level of data protection which ensures sufficient protection of fundamental laws.

In December, guidelines were adopted on the proposal for a regulation on promoting the free movement of citizens and businesses by simplifying the acceptance of certain public documents in the European Union and amending Regulation (EU) No 1024/2012.
In the field of criminal law, Directive 2014/41/EU of the EP and of the Council of 3 April 2014 regarding the European Investigation Order in criminal matters, which was co-initiated by Austria, entered into force on 21 May and Directive 2014/42/EU of the EP and of the Council of 3 April 2014 on the freezing and confiscation of instrumentalities and proceeds of crime in the EU entered into force on 20 May. The proposal for a Directive on the fight against fraud to the Union's financial interests by means of criminal law, on which the Council had agreed on a general approach in 2013, was still being discussed in a trilogue, where the issue of value added tax remained the most controversial topic. The Council continued its consultations on the proposal for a Regulation on the establishment of the European Public Prosecutor's Office in order to combat crimes affecting the financial interests of the Union, submitted by the European Commission in June 2013. The European Commission furthermore submitted a proposal for amending the EUROJUST Regulation, which aims to streamline the functioning and structure of EUROJUST in line with the Lisbon Treaty and to add to the agency's democratic legitimacy. In December, the Council adopted a partial general approach on this proposal. The Council also adopted general approaches on the proposal for a Directive on the strengthening of certain aspects of the presumption of innocence and of the right to be present at trial in criminal proceedings and on a Directive on procedural safeguards for children suspected or accused in criminal proceedings.

In the field of judicial cooperation in civil law matters, the Council on 6 May adopted a Regulation on (another) recast of the Brussels I Regulation (EU) No. 1215/2012 of 12 December on jurisdiction, recognition and enforcement of judgments in civil and commercial matters. On 4 June, Regulation (EU) No. 655/2014 of the EP and of the Council of 15 May 2014 creating a European account preservation order to facilitate cross-border debt recovery in civil and commercial matters entered into force. Work was completed at technical level on the proposals for regulations on jurisdiction, applicable law and the recognition and enforcement of decisions in matters of matrimonial property regimes and regarding the property consequences of registered partnership, but it was not possible to reach political agreement by the end of the year.

2.5.15. Culture

In the field of culture, Council meetings were held in Brussels on 21 May and 25 November and informal meetings were convened at ministerial level in Torino and Napoli on 24 September and 30 October respectively.

The main topic on the agenda was the adoption of the new EU Work Plan for Culture 2015–2018. The priorities defined for concrete actions include accessible culture, cultural heritage, cultural and creative sectors, creative economy and innovation, promotion of cultural diversity and culture in EU external relations. Further priorities for action include the further development of European-wide statistics on culture and consideration of culture in other policy areas. The four-year plan provides for ten thematic expert groups in the context of the Open Method of Coordination and a range of events and studies to be undertaken by the European Commission.

A decision was also taken on the selection of the European Capitals of Culture 2020–2033. In line with the sequence defined, Austria – together with Estonia and a candidate country – is scheduled for 2024. The grant awarded by the EU to each of the selected cities amounts to 1.5 million euro. The two-level procedure, which covers a period of six years is supervised by an independent European expert jury.

As regards the topic of cultural heritage, the major challenges identified were funding, transmission of skills and knowledge, participatory governance, digitisation and sustainability. One of the goals defined for the future is to intensify cross-cutting links with tourism, information and communication technology, architecture and the creative economy. Besides, the Directive on the return of cultural objects unlawfully removed from the territory of a Member State was finalised in May.

2014 also saw the start of the new EU funding programmes. Under the Creative Europe programme, five Austrian projects – including the Ars Electronica Center in Linz and the Kunsthistorische Museum (Museum of Art History) in Vienna – were awarded EU funding totalling 4.3 million euros. Further EU funding of 467,000 euros in total was made available to six Austrian institutions under the Europe for Citizens programme.

In the field of audiovisual matters, the Education, Youth, Culture and Sports Council adopted Conclusions on European audiovisual policy in the digital era on 25 November. The Council thus responded to the Communication from the European Commission on “the European film in the digital era – bridging cultural diversity and competitiveness”, adopted on 15 May. The Conclusions specifically address the film sector and suggest an overall strategy for the audiovisual sector.

The European audiovisual sector is caught between linear (TV, cinema) and non-linear (on demand platforms, mainly available on the Internet) media. Member States are thus called upon to develop solutions for questions relating to film funding, copy right law, value chains, financing of films and the
professionalisation of the sector. To this end, appropriate instruments are to be developed taking account of the discussions on a potential recast of the Audiovisual Media Services Directive and a soon to be created European Film Forum.

2.5.16. EU Budget

Negotiations on the EU budget 2015 and on the top-up of the 2014 budget were based on the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) for the period 2014–2020, adopted in November 2013. Based on 2011 prices, the maximum spending limit for the EU composed of 28 Member States was set at 960 billion euros (commitment appropriations), equalling 1 % of the EU’s gross national income (GNI). After a first mediation procedure failed to produce any results in November, the Council of the EU, the EP and the European Commission succeeded in agreeing on the EU budget for 2015 and the top-up for the 2014 budget in a second round of talks in December. The EU budget 2015 foresees 145.3 billion euros in commitments and 141.2 billion euros in payments.

On 26 May, the EU Council adopted the decision on the System of Own Resources, thus replacing that of 2007. Own resources make up the major source of funding for the EU budget. The way in which own funds are raised is governed by this decision, the implementation regulation and the regulation for making available funds. Following adoption by all Member States in line with their legal and constitutional provisions, the Own Resources Decision will enter into force retroactively as of 1 January. In Austria, the National Council approved of the Own Resources Decision on 11 December.

On 3 April, the High Level Group on Own Resources, chaired by former Italian Prime Minister and EU Commissioner Mario Monti, started its work. The group, whose establishment was agreed in the course of the negotiations on the MFF 2014–2020 and which is composed of members designated by the EU Council, the EP and the European Commission, is mandated with conducting a general review of the own resources system. On 17 December, it submitted its first assessment which is to serve as the basis for further activities in the years 2015/2016.
2.6. **Austria’s Contribution to the Policy Areas of the European Union**

2.6.1. **The European Union’s External Relations**

2.6.1.1. **Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) / Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP)**

Under the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP), current foreign policy issues – including the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP; see Chapter 4.1) – that are of relevance for all EU Member States are dealt with at EU level. Central CFSP topics included the crisis in Ukraine and the developments in Syria and in Iraq, inter alia in connection with the growing threat from the terrorist organisation ISIL/Da’esh, the events in the Middle East and in Libya, and the humanitarian crises and conflicts in Africa (such as the Ebola epidemic in West Africa and developments in the Sahel region and in Central Africa). Other important topics dealt with were issues related to the Western Balkans, including the further approach on Bosnia and Herzegovina’s rapprochement with the EU. The EU was present worldwide with 17 civil and military CSDP missions and operations.

On matters relating to the CFSP, decisions are generally taken unanimously (constructive abstention is possible) by the Foreign Affairs Council based on the strategic guidelines issued by the European Council; in addition, the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy (EU HR) issues statements on current events on behalf of the EU Member States. On 1 November 2014, Federica Mogherini took over the office of High Representative from Catherine Ashton.

The Political and Security Committee (PSC) is composed of representatives from the Member States and regularly monitors international foreign and security policy developments, supervises the implementation of agreed policies and exercises strategic direction in CFSP missions and operations.

EU restrictive measures were in place or adopted by the Union against foreign terrorist groups (Al-Qaida), Afghanistan, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Central African Republic, China, Côte d’Ivoire, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Egypt, Eritrea, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Haiti, Iraq, Iran, Former Yugoslavia, Lebanon, Liberia, Libya, Moldova, Myanmar (Burma), North Korea, the Russian Federation, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, Syria, Tunisia, Ukraine and Zimbabwe.

At the suggestion of the EU HR, the Council may appoint EU Special Representatives (EUSR). The EUSR mandates in effect in 2014 related to Afghanistan, the African Union (AU), the Sahel region, the Horn of Africa, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, the South Caucasus and the conflict in Georgia, the Southern Mediterranean region, the Middle East Peace Process and Human Rights.
In 2014, the CFSP budget amounted to 314.5 million euros. The major share of these funds was used for civilian crisis management operations, the EUSRs’ activities, as well as the promotion of disarmament and non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.

2.6.1.2. The European Neighbourhood Policy

The European Neighbourhood policy (ENP) applies to the Eastern neighbouring countries, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine as well as the ten neighbouring countries of the EU in the Eastern and Southern Mediterranean regions, Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Palestine/PNA, Syria and Tunisia. Belarus, Libya and Syria are included in the ENP but do not fully participate in it.

Cooperation under the ENP is based on the existing bilateral association, partnership and cooperation agreements which are to be supplemented by bilateral Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreements (DCFTA) including non-tariff measures, services, intellectual property rights, competition and public procurement, and by mobility partnerships.

The aim of the ENP is to enable the neighbouring states involved to benefit from the common area of peace, security and prosperity by defining concrete targets set out in individual multiannual Action Plans tailored to each partner country.

The thematic priorities laid down in the Action Plans include areas such as political dialogue and reform; trade, market and regulatory reforms; cooperation in the fields of justice and home affairs; transport, energy, information society and the environment, as well as contact between civil societies.

For the period 2014–2020, measures launched under the ENP are funded on the basis of a standardised European Neighbourhood Instrument (ENI).

After the new Commission took office in autumn, the President of the Commission Juncker mandated Commissioner for European Neighbourhood Policy Hahn with submitting proposals on the re-orientation of the ENP within one year. To this end, Commissioner Hahn and EU HR Mogherini launched a consultation process aimed at reviewing the ENP and involving Member States, representatives from business and industry, civil society representatives and the partner countries.

Under the ENP funding instrument, twinning programmes (administrative partnerships) and TAIEX (short-term expert assistance) support reform processes and institution building in the partner countries. The aim is to assist these countries in their approximation to EU standards and policies by sharing relevant expert knowledge.

As a very active and successful twinning partner in South East Europe, Austria is also interested in getting more closely involved in the European Neighbourhood. In 2014, Austria participated in projects in the Southern Neigh-
Austria’s Contribution to the Policy Areas of the European Union

bourhood in Algeria (energy regulator) and in Tunisia (tourism) in addition to administrative partnerships in Georgia (civil aviation) and in Azerbaijan (social services).

Regarding its neighbouring countries in the Eastern and Southern Mediterranean, the EU currently maintains association agreements with Egypt (2004), Algeria (2005), Israel (2000), Jordan (2002), Lebanon (2006), Morocco (2000), the Palestinian National Authority (1997 Interim Agreement) and Tunisia (1998). Negotiations on a Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement (DCFTA) were initiated in 2013 with Morocco. Joint stocktaking was undertaken in preparation for DCFTA negotiations with Tunisia and Jordan; preparatory talks were held with Egypt.

In the context of cooperation at programme and project level under the Southern Neighbourhood policy and against the background of the Arab Spring, since 2011 special priority has been given to funding programmes and measures that promote the building of democratic and rule-of-law structures in connection with sustainable economic development and strengthening of civil societies in the partner countries.

Based on the ENI Regulation, adopted in March by the Council and the EP, the bilateral and regional ENI Strategy Papers and multiannual indicative programmes for the first phase from 2014–2017 were adopted in July. At the same time stock was taken of the current projects and activities in the region and of the existing coordination mechanisms funded from resources managed by the European Commission, the EU Member States and the European financial institutions. The goal is to optimise political dialogue between the respective stakeholders and donors in order to enable more targeted investments in the region that generate higher socio-economic impact in line with the priorities pursued by Europe and the partners.

In addition to the bilateral cooperation approach pursued under the ENP in the context of Southern neighbourhood policy, the EU has also held the co-chair of the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) since March 2012 which is composed of the Southern Mediterranean states, Jordan and Mauritania, and all EU Member States. Thereby, the complementary character of UfM and the ENP, as well as the effectiveness of EU financial assistance for the Southern Mediterranean countries should be reinforced. Under the UfM, three ministers’ meetings were held on the topics of industry, the environment and climate change, and on the digital economy.

Since its inception in 2009, the implementation of the Eastern Partnership (EaP) has contributed to developing relations between the EU and the EaP countries (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine). The political elements of the Association Agreement with Ukraine were signed on 21 March, all the other provisions on 27 June. The Association Agreements with Georgia and the Republic of Moldova were also signed on 27 June. The objective pursued by these association agreements is political
association and gradual integration into the economic area of the EU as well as the establishment of a comprehensive and deepened free trade zone. Other important aspects fostered by the Eastern Partnership Policy include the promotion of citizens’ mobility and visa liberalisation in a secure environment. The EU is taking gradual steps towards the goal of full visa liberalisation for individual partner countries provided that the necessary requirements for well-managed and safe mobility are fulfilled. Visa facilitation and readmission agreements with Armenia and Azerbaijan entered into force on 1 January and on 1 September respectively. Action Plans for the gradual achievement of the visa liberalisation goal are being implemented with Ukraine and Georgia. Following the successful implementation of an Action Plan for the preparation of visa liberalisation by Moldova, visa requirements were lifted for Moldovan citizens on 28 April.

2.6.1.3. Foreign Trade

The ten most important export markets for the EU in 2014 were: the USA, followed by China, Switzerland, the Russian Federation, Turkey, Japan, Norway, the Republic of Korea, the United Arab Emirates and Brazil.

In 2014, the ten most important export markets for Austria outside the EU were the USA, followed by Switzerland, the Russian Federation, China, Japan, Turkey, Canada, the Republic of Korea, Australia and Saudi Arabia.

With the objective of promoting economic growth and job creation, the EU is conducting negotiations on bilateral Free Trade Agreements with several countries (including the USA, Japan, Thailand, Malaysia, Morocco, India and Vietnam). Those with Canada were concluded at European Commission level in autumn. Apart from these, the EU is currently also negotiating an investment agreement with China.

As markets outside the EU – such as the BRICS countries and the “Next 11” (Egypt, Bangladesh, Indonesia, Iran, Mexico, Nigeria, Pakistan, Philippines, the Republic of Korea, Turkey and Vietnam) – are gaining in importance, Austria launched an “internationalisation campaign”. Its aim is to increase Austrian exports to these future markets since economic growth in Asia and Latin America is considerably stronger than it is in Europe.

2.6.1.4. Human Rights and Democracy

See Chapter 8.3.

2.6.1.5. Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Aid

See Chapters 9.3. to 12.3.1.
2.6.1.6. EFTA/EEA and Relations to Western European Non-EU Member Countries

Founded in 1960, the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) was originally conceived as a counterweight to the European Communities. Today, it consists of the Western European Non-EU Member States Switzerland, Norway, Iceland and Liechtenstein. The association primarily aims to promote economic cooperation while maintaining its member states’ full political freedom to act.

With a view to fully involving the EFTA states in the Single Market, the European Economic Area (EEA) was set up by the EU Member States and Iceland, Norway and Liechtenstein. The core elements of the EEA Agreement are the “four freedoms” – free movement of goods, services, capital and people. The EEA is regulated by additional protocols and flanking or horizontal policies. Agricultural and fisheries products, indirect taxes and a common external trade policy are excluded from the agreement. In exchange for their participation in the Single Market, the EEA states contribute towards combating social and economic imbalances in the EU. Negotiations on the Norwegian Financial Mechanism and the EEA Financial Mechanism for the budget period 2014–2019 started in spring 2014. These negotiations were still ongoing at the end of the year and their completion is not yet foreseeable.

The relationship between the EU and Switzerland is regulated by bilateral agreements (known as Bilateral Agreements I and II). Bilateral Agreements I include a package of seven sectorial agreements that relate mainly to mutual market liberalisation. The nine sectorial agreements known as Bilaterals II govern relations that go beyond the economic context and inter alia pave the way towards closer cooperation between the EU and Switzerland in the fields of justice, police and asylum matters and migration. Based on the Bilaterals II package, Switzerland also participates in the Schengen Area.

In December 2013, the Swiss Federal Council adopted a negotiations mandate for an Institutional Agreement with the EU. The goal is to step up institutional cooperation between Switzerland and the EU in order to guarantee uniform approaches and legal certainty in the Single market. Due to the outcome of the Swiss referendum on the free movement of persons on 9 February, bilateral talks only started in May following the guarantee declaration on the agreement on the free movement of persons given by the Swiss Federal Council. It was, however, not possible to achieve any meaningful progress in the negotiations by the end of the year. A key element of the EU’s negotiating position is the indivisibility of the Single Market and the Four Freedoms, which was again stressed in the Conclusions adopted by the General Affairs Council in December.

2.6.1.7. Relations between the EU and (further) Third Countries

See Chapter 3.
2.6.2. The Enlargement of the European Union

The renewed consensus on enlargement agreed by the December 2006 European Council continued to guide the EU’s enlargement policy. This strategy is based on the premise of the Union’s capacity to integrate new members and stresses – along with the consolidation of commitments made – the observance of a fair and at the same time rigorous conditionality. This means that progress in the accession process, such as the granting of candidate status, is based on clearly defined criteria and may only be recognised if such objectives have been fulfilled. In the accession negotiations priority is given to the fields of rule of law, improvement of economic policy governance and reform of public administration.

The annual “Enlargement Package”, which was presented by the European Commission on 8 October, contains the EU’s Enlargement Strategy and Country Progress Reports for each candidate country. The package stresses the stabilising effect of the EU’s enlargement policy which contributes to the mutual benefits of peace, security and prosperity in Europe. It reinforces the EU’s political and economic strength and has a powerful transformative effect on the countries concerned.

The Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA) is a funding mechanism for the EU pre-accession process. The beneficiary countries are candidate countries under the accession process or potential candidates under the stabilisation and association process (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Turkey). As a flexible instrument, IPA provides assistance depending on the overall progress made by the beneficiary countries and their specific needs as identified in the Commission’s evaluations and annual strategy papers. The IPA II Regulation currently in force entered into effect on 1 January. The total IPA funding volume for the 2014–2020 period amounts to 11,699 billion euros. The declared objectives of IPA II include a more targeted and efficient use of funds, more results-oriented project monitoring and a simplification of procedures.

Austria supported the pre-accession process in very concrete terms by contributing to regional cooperation and by forming EU-funded twinning partnerships as well as short-term expert assistance (TAIEX), thus supporting candidate countries in strengthening their public administrations. In 2014, Austria contributed pro-actively to projects in the environmental sector in Croatia, Serbia and Macedonia, in the field of crime prevention in Bosnia and Herzegovina and on public service reform in Macedonia. Austria was furthermore awarded projects in the field of alignment with the Schengen acquis (Montenegro), anti-discrimination (Serbia) and the development of an ombudsman office (Macedonia).
2.6.2.1. Serbia, Montenegro, Turkey and Iceland

The EU launched accession negotiations with Serbia on 21 January, after a First Agreement of Principles Governing the Normalisation of Relations between Belgrade and Pristina had been reached on 19 April. As well as continuing the normalisation process with Kosovo, Serbia also has to make progress in its domestic policy reform process in order to meet the political and economic criteria for EU accession. The priority area highlighted by the European Commission in its progress report of 8 October included judicial and administrative reform, the fight against corruption and organised crime, protection of minorities and structural reform of the economy.

Accession negotiations with Montenegro were opened on 29 June 2012 with special focus on the areas of rule of law, judiciary, human rights and fight against corruption and organised crime. Two chapters have already been provisionally closed and 14 new chapters were opened by December.

Following its official application for accession in 1987, accession negotiations with Turkey were opened in October 2005. Out of a total of 35 negotiation chapters, only Chapter 25 (Science and Research) has been provisionally closed so far. Another 13 chapters have been opened since 2005, most recently, in November 2013, Chapter 22 (Regional Policy and Coordination of Structural Instruments).

Turkey has been in a customs union with the EU since 1995. When several countries joined the EU in 2004 and 2007, the new EU Member States needed to be incorporated into the customs union. To that end, the Ankara Protocol, an additional protocol to the Ankara Agreement, was signed in July 2005. Turkey issued a declaration expressing its continuing non-recognition of the Republic of Cyprus and explicitly excluding Cyprus from the customs union. The EU Council has repeatedly criticized this breach of contract and in December 2006 decided to freeze negotiations on the eight relevant chapters and to refrain from provisionally concluding any of the other chapters until full implementation of the Ankara Protocol by Turkey.

While accession negotiations have thus slowed down, political developments in the common neighbourhood of the EU and Turkey highlighted the value of closer coordination. In this context, the European Commission has been pursuing a “Positive Agenda” with regard to Turkey, which has been welcomed by the Council of the EU, since 2012. In addition to intensifying the EU–Turkey dialogue on foreign policy, it comprises a technical dialogue below the level of opening and closing of negotiation chapters.

In its Progress Report of 8 October, the European Commission expressed serious concerns with respect to the independence of the judiciary, the protection of the fundamental freedoms and with respect to corruption. It also stresses the importance of external and security policy cooperation due to Turkey’s geostrategic location.
The Readmission Agreement signed on 16 December 2013 and ratified on 26 June launched a dialogue on visa liberalisation with the EU.

Accession negotiations with Iceland have been suspended since May 2013 following a decision to this end taken by the Icelandic government.

2.6.2.2. The European Perspective of Further Countries in the Western Balkans

In its enlargement strategy and progress reports of 8 October, the European Commission noted that considerable progress had been made in Albania and Kosovo, while the integration process stagnated in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Macedonia.

Albania continued to pursue its reform path; in its report of 4 June, the European Commission noted that Albania had made important progress in implementing reforms in the field of justice and in the fight against corruption and organised crime and recommended granting candidate status to Albania, which was endorsed by the Council on 24 June. For accession negotiations to be launched, Albania has to build on the dynamic of reforms, consolidate and implement further reforms in the key areas.

Following the First Agreement of Principles Governing the Normalisation of Relations entered into by Kosovo and Serbia on 19 April 2013, it was possible for negotiations on a Stabilisation and Association Agreement to be launched with Kosovo. The initialling of the agreement on 25 July marked a milestone in the relations between Kosovo and the EU. The pace at which Kosovo moves closer to the EU will depend to a great extent on the progress made by Pristina in the fields of rule of law, judiciary, public administration and establishment of a functioning market economy and in the process of normalisation of relations with Serbia.

A visa dialogue was started with Kosovo on 19 January 2012. The prerequisite for visa liberalisation is fulfilment of technical requirements in the fields of document security, illegal migration and readmission, public order and security as well as external relations and fundamental rights.

Since spring, the EU has pursued a new strategy towards Bosnia and Herzegovina which takes account of the criticism over the woeful socio-economic situation expressed in the civic process at the beginning of February. The core element of this new approach is the Compact for Growth, based on which the EU together with international finance institutes strives to assist Bosnia and Herzegovina in preparing and implementing economic reform programmes. At the same time, the establishment of rule of law structures is inter alia being discussed in the context of the Dialogue on Justice between the EU and Bosnia and Herzegovina. Against the background of a large number of mediation attempts launched by the EU in connection with the election law reform (implementation of the Sejdic/Finci judgement passed by the European Court of Human Rights on minorities’ right to stand for election),
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the EU thus strives to add new momentum to Bosnia and Herzegovina’s rapprochement with the EU.

The opening of accession negotiations with Macedonia has for many years been thwarted by the Greek-Macedonian name dispute. The European Commission has been recommending the start of accession negotiations since 2009. In December, the Council of the EU requested that Macedonia make progress in finding a solution to the name issue, take measures to improve good neighbourly relations and continue its reforms regarding the areas of rule of law, judiciary and fundamental rights. The Council will examine the question of the potential start of accession negotiations as soon as the European Commission has presented a report on the concrete implementation of the reforms and progress in good neighbourly relations.

2.6.3. Macro-Regional Strategies

As mandated by the European Council, the European Commission has already submitted strategy documents and action plans on EU strategies for the Baltic Sea Region (2009), the Danube Region (2011) and the Adriatic-Ionic Region (2014). The preparation of an EU Strategy for the Alpine Region is scheduled for completion in 2015.

Based on the progress report of the European Commission, the General Affairs Council on 22 October 2013 confirmed the effectiveness of macro-regional strategies as instruments towards improving cohesion in the EU and their contribution towards realising the EU 2020 targets without having to create additional legal instruments, budget funds and/or structures. At the request of the Council, the European Commission submitted a report concerning the governance of macro-regional strategies in May, which refers inter alia to enhanced responsibility of the participating states and the European Commission’s commitment to the continuation of its role as strategic coordinator. The Council Conclusions on the governance of macro-regional strategies were adopted on 21 October; in the final analysis, the individual strategies hold responsibility for developing governance options that are adapted to their respective situations.

Established in 2011, the EU Strategy for the Danube Region (EUSDR) consists of four pillars (connecting the region, protecting the environment, building prosperity and strengthening the region) based on which eleven priorities were developed. Austrian institutions are actively involved in all areas and have assumed a coordinating role in three of them (inland navigation, developing human resources and stepping up institutional capacity). In order to ensure the appropriate national involvement and to accompany the inner-Austrian implementation of the EUSDR in an ongoing manner, the Federal Chancellery in agreement with the MFA set up a cooperation platform composed of representatives from the federal ministries, the federal provinces and the social partners. The most important project realised in 2014 was the 3rd Annual Forum and the Meeting of Foreign Ministers of the EUSDR
participating states held in Vienna from 26 to 27 June and involving more than 1,100 participants. The joint statement adopted by the ministers defines the content and the procedural framework for activities in the year ahead, which culminate in the 4th Annual Forum to be convened in Ulm in 2015. The key elements outlined in the joint statement relate to the development of measures aimed at strengthening the region’s competitiveness with a view to reaching the Europe 2020 targets, the establishment of a Danube Strategy Point providing technical support to the ongoing coordination work, the introduction of annually rotating chairs, and to examining the added value of establishing a special co-ordinator as well as stronger involvement of civil society and the private sector in general.

After the European Council of 19 and 20 December 2013 had invited the European Commission to elaborate by June 2015 a macro-regional EU strategy for the Alpine region in cooperation with the states of the region, the year 2014 was marked by the relevant activities. In this context, a special role was assigned to the regions and civil society representatives who were invited to contribute committedly and pro-actively towards a broad-based public consultation process. Austria is particularly in favour of using the positive experiences from the EU Strategy for the Danube Region and existing expert platforms such as the Association of the Alpine States, the Alpine Convention and the EU Alpine Space programme. At a political conference organised in Innsbruck at the invitation of Austria on 17 September, the strategy’s future scope of work was defined in more detail and appropriate steering functions for the future were discussed. Completion of the public consultation process was marked by a Stakeholder Conference in Milano on 1 and 2 December, where the political representatives succeeded in agreeing on the future key principles of the EU Strategy for the Alpine Region, which is to include several thematic fields (preserving biodiversity, sustainable growth, innovation and mobility) and closely involve civil society.

As mandated by the European Council of 13 and 14 December 2012, the European Commission submitted a draft for an EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region. On 29 September, the General Affairs Council adopted the Conclusions on the strategy, which are to serve as guidelines for its implementation. The main focus is on making more effective and efficient use of existing instruments and funds for cross-border cooperation in this region. Due to Carinthia’s and Styria’s constructive membership in the Alps-Adriatic Alliance and the substantial economic and political involvement and commitment to the region, Austria is interested in fully-fledged participation in the EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region.

2.7. Economic and Monetary Union

In order to add new momentum to the European economy, the European Council of 18 December defined investment as a new priority. Together with
structural reform and growth promoting budget consolidation that are to be promoted intensively by the EU Member States, it is to lay the groundwork for growth and employment in Europe.

Lithuania’s efforts towards accession can be considered a confirmation of the continued attractiveness of the Eurozone. On 23 July the EU Council decided to invite Lithuania to join the Eurozone as the 19th country on 1 January 2015 and to introduce the euro as its currency.

2.7.1. Economic Policy Coordination and Governance

On 26 November, the European Commission presented an Investment Plan for Europe based on which 315 billion euros in additional private and public investments are to be made available in the period from 2015 to 2017. To this end, the European Council of 18 December called for the establishment of a European Fund for Strategic Investments by mid-2015. Following the informal Economic and Financial Affairs Council (ECOFIN) of 13 September, the European Investment Bank (EIB) together with the Member States established a Task Force to identify measures aimed at promoting investment. At the ECOFIN Council of 9 December, the Task Force presented its report which provided an overview of the supply-side obstacles to investment and preliminary work on a project pipeline. The EU Member States reported some 2,000 investment opportunities involving a volume of more than 1,300 billion euros. Austria reported 19 projects involving a volume of some 28 billion euros.

Ongoing economic policy coordination and governance is mainly based on the “six-pack” and the “two-pack” reform packages, adopted in 2011 and 2013 respectively. The Macroeconomic Imbalance Procedure (MIP) for the Eurozone Member States was performed for the third time. In autumn, the Eurozone Member States for the second time submitted their draft budgets in advance of their assessment by the European Commission. On 20 June, the EU Council closed the excessive deficit procedures against Austria, which had been ongoing since 2009.

2.7.2. Banking Union

The purpose of the banking union is to lift the close links between banking crisis and sovereign debt crisis frequently observed in the past and to prevent nations from acting unilaterally. Banking union membership is mandatory for all euro countries (19 EU Member States following the accession of Lithuania in January 2015). EU countries that do not belong to the Eurozone may participate in the banking union through voluntary cooperation with the European Central Bank (ECB). In the course of the reporting year, further central elements of the legal framework were adopted.
On 4 November, the new banking supervision system, the Single Supervisory Mechanism (SSM), which is composed of the European Central Bank (ECB) and the national financial supervisory authorities of the participating countries, took effect. A total of 120 significant banking institutions – including eight Austrian banks – are subject to direct supervision by the ECB, which make up 82% of the euro area banking sectors’ assets. The ECB furthermore defines the supervision standards for the other approx. 3,500 banks in the Eurozone and monitors their application. In supervising these banks, the ECB cooperates closely with the relevant authorities at national level. The ECB had previously conducted an in-depth assessment, involving asset quality reviews and prospective stress tests of the 130 largest banks in the euro currency area.

Directive 2014/59/EU establishing a framework for the recovery and resolution of credit institutions and investment firms (BRRD), which was adopted on 15 May, defines a uniform legal framework and provides for “bail-in” mechanism from 1 January 2016 onwards. This means that in the event of a resolution it is primarily the institution’s shareholders and creditors who bear the cost of failure to the largest possible extent and only then are funds from resolution funds, which are financed by the entire banking industry, to be used. Banks are to finance these national funds by contributing with a total of 1% of their secured deposits.

The content-related provisions of this directive are implemented by the Single Resolution Mechanism (SRM), the relevant regulation (EU) No. 806/2014 was adopted on 15 July. The central body in this context is the European Single Resolution Board (SRB), which takes the respective resolution decisions which are then to be implemented by the national authorities. The SRB takes all resolution decisions that relate to significant banks or banks that are active across borders or whose resolution would require funding from the common fund. The resolution process itself is initiated by the ECB. A Single Resolution Fund (SRF) with a target size of 1% of the secured deposits is to be built up within eight years and financed by the Member States participating in the banking union. The necessary legal basis is created by the Agreement on the Transfer and Mutualisation of Contributions to the SRF, signed by 26 Member States – including Austria – on 21 May.

The objective pursued by the Directive on the Deposit Guarantee Schemes (DGS), adopted on 16 April, is strengthening investor confidence in a guarantee scheme that facilitates fast pay-out of guaranteed deposits. In order to ensure availability of the relevant financial means, a fund is to be built up over the next ten years that shall at least reach a target level of 0.8% of the covered deposits. This fund is financed through regular risk-adjusted contributions from the banks.
2.7.3. Strengthening the Economic and Monetary Union

The Strategic Agenda adopted by the European Council of 26 and 27 June defines the further development of the Economic and Monetary Union (EMU) as one of its key priorities for the next five years. It is to be developed into a more solid and resilient factor of stability and growth based on stronger euro area governance and stronger economic policy coordination, convergence and solidarity, while respecting the integrity of the internal market and preserving transparency and openness towards non-euro EU countries. The Euro Summit on 24 October and the European Council of 18 December requested that the President of the European Commission in cooperation with the President of the Euro Summit, the Euro Group and the ECB involving the Member States present a report on closer economic policy coordination to the European Council in June 2015. Another goal defined in the context of further development of the EMU is to ensure democratic legitimacy and accountability at each level where decisions are taken and implemented.

2.7.4. Single Currency and Eurozone

In line with the priority goal of ensuring price stability, the Governing Council of the European Central Bank pursued the objective of keeping the inflation rate to below but close to 2% in the medium-term. Against the background of very low inflation rates in the euro area, the ECB Council adopted a far-reaching monetary policy easing on 5 June. The key interest rate was reduced to 0.15%. The interest on the deposit facility was for the first time reduced to a level of –0.1%. The ECB Council of 4 September reduced these two interest rates yet again to 0.05% and –0.2% respectively and agreed on asset-backed securities and covered bond purchase programmes. The funds thus generated by banks will facilitate credit provision to the euro area economy.

2.7.5. Financial Assistance to Euro Area Countries

Support under the EU “rescue funding mechanisms” – the European Financial Stability Facility (EFSF), the European Financial Stabilisation Mechanism (EFSM), the European Stability Mechanism (ESM) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) – was/is currently being provided to Greece (since May 2010), Ireland (December 2010), Portugal (April 2011), Spain (July 2012 to recapitalise its banking sector) and Cyprus (April 2013). Financial assistance provided in the form of loans requires recipient countries to implement eco-

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2 The first financing package for Greece was funded through bilateral loans from the euro area member countries; the second package is financed from EFSF funds raised on the capital market.
economic adaptation programmes (consolidation, structural reform etc.) and/or sector-specific reform programmes (for instance in the banking sector) subject to strict conditionalities. Implementation is regularly reviewed by the lenders, a “troika” comprising the European Commission, the European Central Bank (ECB) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). Since 1 July, the ESM, as a permanent mechanism, has been exclusively in charge of new financial support programmes that may be needed in euro area countries.

Ireland was able to complete its financial assistance programme at the end of 2013, Spain in January and Portugal in June. The troika monitors progress made by these countries in the context of post-programme surveillance.

With respect to Greece, the troika conducted the fourth review under the Second Economic Adjustment Programme. Confirmation that the reform measures to be taken under the programme were indeed carried out resulted in the disbursement of programme tranches. At the end of the year, Greece received 141.8 billion euros made available under the second EFSF programme. These funds will be supplemented by IMF loans. The fifth review mission started at the end of September. On 8 December, the Eurogroup stated that completion of the fifth review and disbursement of the residual funds under the EFSF was no longer possible by the scheduled end of the EFSF Programme at the end of December. On 19 December, the Board of the EFSF thus extended the programme by two months to the end of February 2015. For the time after the EFSF programme has expired, the Eurogroup on 8 December expressed its willingness to grant Greece an Enhanced Conditions Credit Line (ECCL) under the ESM.

Since April 2013, Cyprus has been subject to a macro-economic adjustment programme with a programme volume of up to 10 billion euros from ESM and IMF funds. The programme’s objective is to support measures for the adequate reduction of the financial sector and measures in the fields of fiscal consolidation, structural reforms and privatisation. The third and fourth reviews were undertaken from 29 January to 11 February and from 6 to 17 May. Confirmation that the reform measures to be taken under the programme had indeed been carried out resulted in the disbursement of three programme tranches from the ESM. By the end of December, the ESM had paid out 5.7 out of the total loan volume of nine billion euros.

2.8. Information on Europe

See Chapters 16.3 and 16.4.
3. Challenges and Developments on all Five Continents

3.1. Europe

3.1.1. Austria’s Neighbourhood

3.1.1.1. South Tyrol

South Tyrol continues to enjoy special status within Austrian foreign policy. The protective role assumed by Austria with regard to South Tyrol and enshrined in the Treaty of Paris of 5 September 1946 is exercised in a responsible manner by the Austrian Federal Government. It is expressed in an ongoing supportive interest in the autonomy, political and general developments in South Tyrol and in regular talks between those responsible at political level in Vienna, Innsbruck and Bolzano/Bozen. At European level, the autonomy of South Tyrol serves as a model for the resolution of minority conflicts. It has become a common good shared by all three linguistic groups (German, Italian and Ladin) living in South Tyrol and as such is to be preserved and developed dynamically. Concurrently, there is no doubt for Austria that under international law South Tyrol's autonomy is also based on the right to self-determination, which – as a continuing right – is exercised by South Tyrol in the form of a high degree of autonomy. Austria maintains very amicable, good neighbourly relations with Italy. The common membership of Austria and Italy in the European Union has given rise to a number of additional links that are also of benefit to South Tyrol. The “European region Tyrol – South Tyrol – Trentino” is a good example of the practical application of European instruments in the interest of regional co-operation.

On 10 January, Province Governor Luis Durnwalder (Südtiroler Volkspartei, SVP) handed over office to his successor Arno Kompatscher (also SVP). For 25 years Durnwalder had played a leading role in shaping the destiny of South Tyrol, which in terms of economic output, standard of living, infrastructure, social and education system counts among the leading regions of Europe. Since the elections to the Province Parliament in 2013, the SVP and the Partito Democratico (PD) have governed the province in a coalition. In line with the Autonomy Statute, all three language groups are represented in the province government. Christian Tommasini is the first representative of the Italian language group to hold the office of First Deputy Province Governor. His first inaugural visit took Province Governor Kompatscher to Vienna on 26 and 27 January.

At the elections to the European Parliament (EP) on 25 May, the SVP won 48.01 % of the votes and the party’s MEP Herbert Dorfmann will thus serve for a further term on the EP. Winning 15.67 %, the PD came second, while the leftist “Liste Tsipras” (supported by the Greens in South Tyrol) won 9.9 % and the Freedom Party 5.98 %, thus respectively taking third and fourth place.
At the meeting focussing on the topic of “Regions in Europe – Europe of the Regions”, organised by Province Governor Arno Kompatscher in Prösels Castle in Völs am Schlern on 5 July, the Heads of Government of Austria and of Italy, Federal Chancellor Werner Faymann and Prime Minister Matteo Renzi met for the first time in South Tyrol. The topic of the European dimension was not only the theme of the meeting but also the focus of bilateral discussions.

After years of struggling to find a solution for the Victory Monument in Bolzano/Bozen dating from the fascist era, the documentation centre located in the monument’s crypt was opened on 21 July. The exhibition “BZ ‘18-’45. Ein Denkmal, eine Stadt, zwei Diktaturen” (BZ ’18-’45. One monument, one city, two dictatorships) turns the monument into a memorial and is designed to send out a strong signal against totalitarianism. It illustrates the Victory Monument’s history and the time from 1918 to 1945 putting it in the regional and supra-regional context with a special focus on Italian Fascism and the period during which South Tyrol was occupied by the Nazis.

In 2014, financial relations between Rome and Bolzano/Bozen were subject to comprehensive reorganisation. This step had become necessary as many budget consolidation measures launched by Italy over the last few years had violated the financial agreement (Milan Agreement) – in force since 2009 – and represented a major burden on the South Tyrolean provincial budget. The objective of this agreement was to determine South Tyrol’s contribution to the government budget in the longer term and thus to avoid further cuts. It was furthermore possible to successfully change the payment flows’ modalities in favour of South Tyrol. Political agreement on this “Sicherungspakt” (safeguarding agreement) was reached on 15 October. The agreement itself was signed on 16 December following its implementation in the course of the Budget Act 2015. Subsequently, South Tyrol withdrew all appeals it had filed with the Constitutional Court for violations against the Milan Agreement. Referring to the protection of linguistic minorities and the implementation of autonomy, Prime Minister Matteo Renzi explicitly informed Federal Chancellor Faymann about the new provisions governing the mutual financial relations; consequently the agreement also became relevant under international law.

The year 2014 saw a number of changes at the heads of the South Tyrolean parties: in the SVP Philipp Achammer succeeded Richard Theiner; Walter Blaas replaced Ulli Mair as chairman of the Freedom Party; and after 31 years, the leading politician of the Süd-Tiroler Freiheit (South Tyrolean Freedom party) Eva Klotz resigned as Member of the Province Parliament for private reasons.

There is an active exchange of visits at all levels between Austria and South Tyrol.

On 27 January, the Province Governor of South Tyrol Arno Kompatscher paid his inaugural visit to Vienna and met Federal President Heinz Fischer,
the President of the National Council Barbara Prammer, Federal Chancellor Werner Faymann and Federal Minister Sebastian Kurz. The South Tyrolean Province Councillor for German Education and Culture and for Integration, Philipp Ahammer, paid inaugural visits on 6 March to Federal Minister Josef Ostermayer, on 6 April to Federal Minister Sebastian Kurz and on 16 July to Federal Minister Gabriele Heinisch-Hosek. On 2 May, Federal Minister Sebastian Kurz visited Bolzano/Bozen, where he met Province Governor Arno Kompatscher and Province Councillor Philipp Ahammer while on 3 May he participated in the SVP party congress in Merano/Meran. On 19 June, Federal Minister Sebastian Kurz, Tyrolean Province Governor Günther Platter and Province Councillor Philipp Ahammer participated in a discussion on young politics in the European region held in Seefeld. Federal Chancellor Werner Faymann took part in the meeting “Regionen in Europa – Europa der Regionen” (Regions in Europe – Europe of the Regions) on 5 July in Völs am Schlern. Together with Federal Minister Andrä Rupprechter and Tyrolean Province Governor Günther Platter, Province Governor Arno Kompatscher participated in the Tyrol Day at the European Forum Alpbach on 17 August. There was also an active exchange of visits, for instance of province governors and presidents of province governments, in the context of cooperation within the European region Tyrol – South Tyrol – Trentino.

In 2014, the budget of the Province of South Tyrol amounted to 5.181 billion euros. Economic growth stood at 0.7 % and the inflation rate at 1.1 %. In 2014, South Tyrol’s exports increased by 3.9 % (3.97 billion euros) and imports by 0.4 % (4.04 billion euros) while the unemployment rate reached 4.4 %.

3.1.1.2. Austria’s Neighbours

3.1.1.2.1. Germany

The results of the parliamentary elections to the German Bundestag 2013, which resulted in a four-fifths majority of the government “Merkel III” formed by CDU/CSU and SPD, was also reflected in the outcome of the elections to the European Parliament (EP) of 25 May. The only exception was the notable success achieved by the Euro-critical party Alternative für Deutschland (AfD, Alternative for Germany), which took 7 % of the vote. The AfD continued to achieve similar levels of support at the elections to the state parliaments of Saxony, Thuringia and Brandenburg in autumn.

The parliamentarian opposition is led by “Die Linke” (the Left) (8.6 % at the elections to the Bundestag), which aims to facilitate left of centre alliances at national level. The first government led by a Prime Minister of the Left, Bodo Ramelow, in Thuringia was sworn in on 5 December. Supported by the SPD (Social Democratic Party of Germany) and the Greens, it is considered a test case for “Red-Red-Green”. The upward trend experienced by the Greens came to a halt at the elections to the Bundestag. The mass demonstrations
of the Pegida movement (Patriotische Europäer gegen die Islamisierung des Abendlandes, Patriotic Europeans against the Islamisation of the Western World), which were mainly held in Dresden, were a source of domestic policy debates.

**Important dates** were officially commemorated in 2014 and a number of ceremonies held (such events included the centennial of the outbreak of the First World War, 75 years since the outbreak of the Second World War and 25 years since the fall of the Berlin Wall).

Multilateralism continues to play a highly relevant role in German foreign policy and the country attaches key importance to the United Nations, climate conferences and NATO. In the summer, Germany de facto took over the G7 Presidency. In December, Germany’s OSCE Chairmanship for 2016 was confirmed. At the Munich Security Conference in February, Federal President Joachim Gauck, Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier and Defence Minister Ursula von der Leyen issued a call for increased foreign policy commitment, which translated in very active diplomacy with respect to the Ukraine-Russia crisis and support of the Peshmerga in northern Iraq. Germany in principle supports the sanctions against Russia – also from the economic perspective. In terms of energy, however, Russia remains an important partner (Nord Stream). The mission in Afghanistan was terminated, but 850 German instructors and military advisers continued to stay in the country.

The USA remains the most important partner outside of Europe, although relations were noticeably strained as a result of the NSA spying affair.

At European policy level, Germany continues to push for more binding economic policy coordination within the Eurozone. In Germany’s view, renationalisation of EU competences is not an option. With respect to the European climate and energy policy until 2030, Germany aims at setting an ambitious triad of binding targets, consisting of greenhouse gas reduction by at least 40 %, a renewable energy share of 30 % and an energy efficiency level of 30 %.

Austria and Germany enjoy excellent bilateral relations at political, economic and social levels, not least due to the large number of close good neighbourly links at all levels (federal, state and municipal). Germany remains Austria’s most important trading partner. Recently, relations with the Free State of Bavaria were, however, marked by substantial differences of opinion on several specific issues (Hypo-Alpe-Adria, the planned introduction of a passenger vehicle toll in Germany, landing rights for Salzburg airport).

### 3.1.1.2.2. Italy

After the competitive situation within the governing party Partito Democratico (PD) had quickly come to a head, Prime Minister Enrico Letta resigned on 14 February. On 22 February, the new government led by PD party chairman Matteo Renzi was sworn in. The PD’s coalition partner is the Nuovo
Centrodestra party, a splinter of Berlusconi’s Forza Italia led by Interior Minister Angelino Alfano. The opposition is formed by Silvio Berlusconi’s Forza Italia, the Lega Nord under its new chairman Matteo Salvini, the protest party Movimento 5 Stelle led by Beppe Grillo, the right-wing party Fratelli d’Italia and the left-wing party Sinistra, Ecologia e Libertà (including the Greens). The South Tyrolean People’s Party (Südtiroler Volkspartei, SVP) succeeded, particularly in the Senate, in positioning itself with the autonomy group as the party that tipped the scale in favour of the government.

At the elections to the European Parliament (EP) on 25 May, the Pro-European PD succeeded in scoring an historic success by winning 40.8 %, of votes, which also meant that Prime Minister Renzi received an additional boost. The Euro-sceptical Movimento 5 Stelle did not succeed to rally the expected support. It won 21.2 % thus coming off worse than at the parliamentary elections in 2013. The same held true for Forza Italia (16.8 %) and Nuovo Centrodestra (4.4 %). Due to a special regulation the SVP was awarded one seat.

Prime Minister Matteo Renzi pursues an intensive reform programme: liberalisation and reform of the labour market, reduction of the tax burden, reform of public administration including a spending review, simplification and acceleration of judicial processes, constitutional reform (including, inter alia, the transformation of the Senate into a “Senate of the Regions” in connection with which the related constitutional reform successfully passed a first hurdle in August).

As Foreign Minister Federica Mogherini had been appointed High Representative and Vice President of the European Commission, Paolo Gentiloni (PD) was sworn in as Foreign Minister on 31 October.

The priorities of the Italian EU Council Presidency in the 2nd half of the year were growth and employment (against the background of its poor economic situation, Italy focuses on enhanced flexibility in the context of the Stability and Growth Pact); migration in the Mediterranean region (in this connection Italy, being one of the first landing states, calls for greater European solidarity); establishment of a link to the Expo 2015 by using Milan also as the venue for informal Council meetings.

At foreign policy level, Italy supports the European integration of the West Balkan states and also of Turkey. It also attaches great importance to the Middle East Peace Process. In the Russia-Ukraine crisis, Russia is seen as dialogue partner. Due to its geopolitical location Italy is, furthermore, an important NATO alliance partner. The country is an active member of the Central European Initiative and supports macro-regional EU strategies for the Adriatic-Ionian region and the Alpine region. From 2013–2014 it held the Presidency of the Alpine Convention. A priority that is shared by Italy and Austria is the protection of human rights: like Austria, Italy was a member of the UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC) for the period 2011–2014.
The excellent and intensive bilateral relations are characterised by a very active exchange of visits between Austria and Italy, intense economic relations and mutual tourism. Italy remains Austria’s second largest trading partner; trade relations with the Northern Italian regions are particularly close. The majority of the approximately 300 subsidiaries of Austrian companies in Italy are also located in the north of the country. For Austrian holidaymakers, Italy is still the unrivalled number one holiday destination, which is reflected in about 1.9 million visits per year.

3.1.1.2.3. Liechtenstein

At domestic policy level, the first half of the year was marked by two popular initiatives on the amendment of the Law on Occupational Pensions of the State. Both initiatives were rejected by voters on 15 June. At the beginning of October, the initiative for the lowering of the threshold for representation in Parliament from 8 % to 5 % of the votes also failed to win sufficient support. Employment rates saw a constant increase in 2014. At 2.2 % the service sector registered the highest growth rates followed by the financial sector with an increase of 1.2 %. Almost half of the Principality’s approximately 36,700 employees are commuters who commute to Liechtenstein mainly from Switzerland and Austria.

Priorities pursued by the Principality of Liechtenstein at foreign policy level include safeguarding its sovereignty, free access to global markets and closer relations with its neighbouring states. Both in the bilateral and in the multilateral context, Liechtenstein as a member of the UN, the OSCE, the CoE, EFTA, EEA and the WTO, proves itself a reliable, committed partner that values solidarity in Europe and the world.

In May, the Principality signed the FATCA Agreement with the United States, which obliges Liechtenstein’s banks to report accounts held by US citizens but at the same time guarantees continued access to the US market for service providers active on the Liechtenstein financial market.

Bilateral relations between Austria and Liechtenstein are characterised by close and excellent links in all fields; close to 2,200 Austrian citizens live in the Principality. The year 2014 also saw a further increase in Austrian exports to Liechtenstein.

3.1.1.2.4. Switzerland

The seven-member Federal Council (government) elected following the 2011 parliamentary elections by the Federal Assembly for the period 2012–2016 is mainly conservative/liberal.

The adoption by a narrow margin (50.3 %) of the SVP initiative “Against mass immigration” on 9 February, whose implementation would also restrict EU citizens’ freedom of movement, is a strain on relations with the
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EU and especially impacts the ongoing discussions on institutional relations. There is even the risk of suspension of the Bilateral I Agreements (“Guillotine clause”). The Swiss government is required to legally implement the initiative by February 2017, although numerous questions remain unresolved. An initial draft law is to be presented by the beginning of 2015.

The Ecopop initiative “Stop overpopulation – safeguard our natural environment” was rejected on 30 November. The adoption of this initiative would have terminated the free movement of persons agreement with the EU.

Switzerland makes a contribution towards reducing economic and social imbalances in the enlarged EU (“Enlargement contribution”: about one billion euros in five years). In October, the EU and Switzerland signed a joint statement on business taxation in which Switzerland commits itself to abolishing certain cantonal tax regimes.

On 18 May, the Swiss population rejected the acquisition of 22 Gripen fighter jets and the introduction of a minimum wage. An initiative towards ensuring the nationwide provision of basic medical care was, however, adopted. The referendum on the early closure of the NPP Mühleberg near Bern failed: it will thus be closed down according to plan at the end of 2019.

Switzerland’s foreign policy priorities remain focused on relations with its neighbouring states, the EU, other important third countries (USA, Western Balkans, BRICS countries) as well as global issues. Special importance has traditionally been attached to foreign economic policy, neutrality and strengthening the Geneva headquarters of the UN.

In the years 2014/2015, Switzerland and Serbia assume OSCE Chairmanship. Switzerland contributes considerable resources to the OSCE mediation capacities and established an international Ukraine contact group.

Bilateral relations with Austria are characterised by a comprehensive set of treaties and the traditionally frequent exchange of visits at all levels. Some 63,000 Austrians (of which 21,000 hold dual citizenship) reside permanently in Switzerland, of which about 8,200 commute daily across the Austro-Swiss border. Switzerland is Austria’s third largest trading partner, the fourth most important buyer of Austrian goods, the second most important consumer of services and Swiss nationals make up the third largest group of tourists in Austria.

3.1.1.2.5. Slovakia

On 16 January, shortly after having taken office, Federal Minister Sebastian Kurz paid one of his first visits abroad to Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Miroslav Lajčák in Bratislava. On 3 March, President of State Ivan Gašparovič paid a farewell visit to Vienna and on 17 July, the newly elected Head of State in office since 15 June, Andrej Kiska, was received in Vienna by Federal President Heinz Fischer for an official working visit. On 16 July,
Federal Chancellor Werner Faymann met Prime Minister Robert Fico for consultations in Bratislava.

Bilateral economic relations have continued to develop dynamically. After the Netherlands and ahead of Germany, Austria is the second largest foreign investor in Slovakia. New subsidiaries are constantly being set up in Slovakia by Austrian companies. Some 2,500 Austrian companies active in Slovakia employ more than 40,000 local staff. In turn, about 43,000 Slovaks work in Austria, of which some 25,000 are employed in the healthcare sector.

After a lengthy period of preparation, a meeting of Austrian and Slovakian members of government was held in Bratislava on 14 October. The Austrian government was represented by Federal Ministers Sebastian Kurz, Rudolf Hundstorfer and Alois Stöger. On the part of Slovakia the meeting was attended by Foreign Minister Miroslav Ľajčák, Minister of Transport, Construction and Regional Development Ján Počiatek, Minister of Labour, Social Affairs and Family Ján Richter as well as Minister of Education, Science, Research and Sport Peter Pellegrini. The event was concluded with a meeting between Federal Chancellor Werner Faymann and Prime Minister Robert Fico. The fight against youth unemployment, strengthening the economy as well as the implementation of transport and infrastructure projects topped the agenda. In the context of this government meeting, agreement was inter alia reached on enhanced cooperation in the field of dual education.

At the beginning of July, Slovakia took over the one-year Presidency of the Visegrad Group (V4). The Slovak Presidency promotes a strengthening of the consultation mechanism of the Visegrád countries (primarily on EU issues) and also advocates closer cooperation between the V4 and Austria. On the invitation of the Presidency, Federal Minister Sebastian Kurz participated in a meeting of the foreign ministers of the V4 states and the Western Balkan states in Bratislava on 30 and 31 October.

Slovakia is a close partner of Austria in the EU. With respect to the future shaping of the EU and the Eurozone – Austria is currently Slovakia’s only neighbouring country in the Eurozone – both countries hold very similar views.

The development and expansion of the bilateral transport infrastructure, especially along the border section on the River March, remains a priority. An Austrian-Slovak working group of transport experts was established. Based on a memorandum of understanding, it is to expedite implementation of existing projects, also by defining concrete timelines.

In the energy sector, cooperation on issues related to supply security of gas and oil is of strategic relevance. In view of the planned construction of a new nuclear power plant in Jaslovské Bohunice and the resumption of building activities for reactor units 3 and 4 in the Mochovce nuclear power plant, Austria again reiterated its legitimate safety concerns.
Cross-border and regional cooperation between both countries is also highly diverse and wide-ranging. Under the respective cross-border cooperation programmes, joint projects were implemented in the fields of transport, environment, local business development and promotion of innovation.

3.1.1.2.6. Slovenia

The early parliamentary elections on 13 July resulted in a landslide victory of the political newcomer Miro Cerar and his “Party of Miror Cerar” (Modern Centre Party, SMC), established just before the elections, which won 34.6% of votes. On 18 September, the new centre-left government, formed by the SMC, the Pensioners’ Party (DeSUS) and the Social Democrats (SD), was sworn in by parliament. Karl Viktor Erjavec again assumed the offices of Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister.

The economically and politically very close and intensive bilateral relations between Austria and Slovenia were further developed and also intensified at the level of the neighbouring federal provinces. After a break of ten years, the Joint Committee Carinthia-Slovenia, for instance, met again in Brdo on 25 April. On 16 May, the founding meeting held to establish a Joint Committee between the Province of Styria and Slovenia convened in Graz.

In the context of the inaugural visit Federal Minister Sebastian Kurz paid to Foreign Minister Karl Viktor Erjavec on 13 March, a broad convergence of common interests and assessments on issues relating to South East Europe was confirmed. On this visit, Kurz also met Prime Minister Alenka Bratušek, President of State Borut Pahor and representatives of the German-speaking ethnic group in Slovenia.

Cooperation between the two foreign ministries was deepened. An Informal Working Group Austria-Slovenia was established and held its first meetings in Vienna on 21 May and in Ljubljana on 19 December.

The quadrilateral dialogue between the foreign ministries of Austria, Slovenia, Switzerland and Liechtenstein was continued. On 23 and 24 July, Secretary General for Foreign Affairs Michael Linhart hosted a meeting of the state secretaries and secretaries-general of the four foreign ministries in Bregenz.

The “Trilateral Cooperation” between Austria, Slovenia and the latest EU member Croatia was continued at top political level. On 17 March, Federal President Heinz Fischer invited his counterparts Borut Pahor and Ivo Josipovič to attend a meeting in Vienna. On 20 June, Prime Minister Alenka Bratušek hosted a trilateral meeting of heads of government in Brdo. The next such meeting was organised by Croatia in Opatija on 9 December.

With respect to the Slovenian ethnic group in Carinthia, the historic compromise achieved in resolving the issue of bilingual topographical signs in Carinthia in 2011 has contributed towards strengthening the bilateral basis of trust. The Carinthian Province Government included the promotion of the Slovenian ethnic group in its government programme and is working on a
new Province constitution, which is to take more account of the protection of the Slovenian ethnic group. In general, a new quality was added to the dialogue with the ethnic group and this has been perceived positively by the Slovenian government.

The official recognition of the German-speaking ethnic group as a minority in Slovenia remains an important concern for Austria and is regularly addressed in bilateral contacts. As in 2012, the National Council, on 12 March unanimously adopted a resolution in which it calls upon the Federal Government to work towards the official recognition of the German-speaking ethnic group.

Austria consistently pursues the goal of a rapid and final processing of the still pending denationalisation cases involving Austrian nationals by Slovenian authorities and courts.

Bilateral economic relations are most intensive. With a share of 48 % of all foreign direct investments, Austria is still the largest foreign investor in Slovenia. Some 700 Austrian companies have subsidiaries in Slovenia. With approximately 1,300 euros, Slovenian citizens are the most important per capita consumers of Austrian products.

In turn, Austrians are the most important per capita consumers of Slovenian goods within the EU.

3.1.1.2.7. Czech Republic

Following the early elections to the Chamber of Deputies on 25 and 26 October 2013, coalition talks between the Social Democrats (ČSSD), the economic-liberal party “ANO” and the Christian Democrats (KDU-ČSL) led to the formation of a coalition government led by Prime Minister Bohuslav Sobotka, which was sworn in on 29 January. The municipal elections and the elections held for the renewal of part of the Senate in October also contributed towards a general strengthening of the government’s stability.

Since the new Czech government has taken office, bilateral relations at government level have gained new momentum. The focus is being placed on positive commonalities, which means much less attention is being paid to some previously problematic issues.

An important highlight in this context was the official visit Foreign Minister Lubomír Zaorálek paid to Federal Minister Sebastian Kurz on 3 April, during which it was agreed that cooperation between the two foreign ministries was to be deepened. Subsequently, on 24 July, the first consultations were held by the Informal Working Group Austria-Czech Republic.

On 24 April, Federal President Heinz Fischer participated in the ceremony organised by the Czech Republic to celebrate the fifth anniversary of the “Eastern Partnership”. On 10 and 11 December the Federal President,
together with his Slovenian counterpart Borut Pahor, were guests at the V4 Summit of Presidents in Prague.

At the invitation of Federal Chancellor Werner Faymann, Prime Minister Bohuslav Sobotka came to Vienna on 3 June, and on 31 July the Federal Chancellor paid a return visit to Prague. Following-up on these visits, initial preparations were made for a trilateral meeting of the Heads of State of Austria, the Czech Republic and Slovakia to be held in January 2015.

The positive, dynamic development of bilateral relations was also confirmed by visits the Province Governors of Lower Austria, Erwin Pröll, and Upper Austria, Josef Pühringer, paid to Prague. In their meetings with top-level government representatives discussions focused on neighbourhood policy issues. This positive dynamic has also been supported by high-level parliamentary contacts.

A novel approach was taken by the joint meeting of the two foreign ministers and the province governors of Lower Austria and Upper Austria as well as the governors of the South Moravian Region, the Vysočina Region and the South Bohemian Region held in Mikulov (Nikolsburg) on 11 November. Participants thus opened a new chapter in the relations between Austria and the Czech Republic as account was being taken of the fact that the intensification and sustainability striven for in relations requires interaction between the Austrian and the Czech national authorities with the Austrian federal provinces and the Czech regions as well as the Euroregions and municipalities.

The cooperation-related topics discussed ranged from infrastructure, transport, energy, science and research to cross-border healthcare provision and also covered the project of a common history book dealing with the events of the 19th and 20th century. The latter is to be prepared within the next three years by the Permanent Conference of Austrian and Czech Historians, which was set up in 2009. Funding has already been secured by the Austrian and Czech partners.

Participants at the meeting in Mikulov also welcomed the planned continuation of the support programme Austria-Czech Republic 2014–2020 in the context of European Territorial Cooperation (ETC). In line with the EU 2020 Strategy it will primarily support Austrian-Czech projects in the fields of business/innovation, environment, education/training and institutional capacity.

The swift development of bilateral transport infrastructure, especially the sections Brno–Vienna and Prague–Ceske Budejovice–Linz, remains a priority for both countries.

With respect to energy policy, Austria strives to establish a comprehensive energy dialogue on sustainable energy supply. Both countries are interested in building up a common gas market.
In April, the largely state-owned energy group CEZ terminated a call for bids for the expansion of the Temelin NPP by two additional reactor units, as the Czech government was not willing to provide state guarantees to ensure the profitability of the project. Generally, however, the Czech government, the opposition and the general public support a continuation of the country’s nuclear energy policy. Austria continues to focus on representing the legitimate and legally founded Austrian security interests – especially as regards any plans for the construction of final repositories near the Austrian border.

The Czech Republic is still Austria’s most important trading and economic partner in Central and Eastern Europe. The relatively even balance of trade which remains at a very high level and the substantial share of Austrian investments in the Czech Republic (more than ten billion euros) go to show how closely the two national economies are interlinked.

3.1.1.2.8. Hungary

At the parliamentary elections in April, the Hungarian Civic Alliance (Fidesz) together with its ally the Christian Democrats (KDNP), won 44.87% of the votes. Not least due to a new electoral law, this result translated into a two-thirds majority in the Hungarian Parliament, which had been shrunk from 386 to 199 seats. Winning 20.2%, the right-wing Jobbik Party became the third most powerful party in the country.

On 6 June, the third government led by Prime Minister Viktor Orbán was sworn in in Parliament. Foreign Minister János Martonyi was succeeded by Former Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Justice Tibor Navracsics, who only held this office until his appointment as EU Commissioner for Education, Culture, Youth and Sports. On 24 September, Péter Szijjártó was appointed head of the newly restructured Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade.

The relations between Austria and Hungary are intensive and marked by broad-based exchange, which is also reflected in regular contacts at all political levels and especially in high-level political talks. During a working visit on 5 March, Federal Minister Sebastian Kurz, for instance, met Foreign Minister János Martonyi and the State Secretary for Foreign Affairs and Trade at the Office of the Prime Minister, Péter Szijjártó in Budapest. On 15 October, Federal President Heinz Fischer paid an official visit to Hungary in the context of which he met President of State János Áder, Prime Minister Viktor Orbán und the Speaker of the Hungarian Parliament László Kövér. On the same day Péter Szíjjártó, in his new capacity as Foreign Minister, paid an inaugural visit to Federal Minister Sebastian Kurz. Regular consultations under the bilateral working group set up by the two foreign ministries were also continued.

On 27 June, the 25th anniversary of the dismantling of the Iron Curtain between Austria and Hungary by the then Foreign Minsters Alois Mock and
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Gulya Horn (who cut the fence between the two countries), young people from Austria, Hungary and Slovakia gathered at the venue of this historic event near Klingenbach for a “Celebration of Freedom and Youth”. Alongside Federal Minister Sebastian Kurz, the Slovakian Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Miroslav Lajčák as well as the Hungarian Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade Péter Szijjártó participated in this event.

Economic relations play a highly relevant role in the bilateral relationship. Despite the economic crisis, bilateral trade has recovered and reached pre-crisis levels. With a volume of 9.1 billion euros, Austria is currently the fourth largest investor in Hungary. Several Austrian companies active in Hungary have signed “strategic business partnerships” with the Hungarian state.

Although many Austrian companies are doing very well in Hungary, some sectors are facing problems. The important role that a predictable and secure investment climate plays for Austria’s economic presence in Hungary has therefore been a recurring topic in bilateral discussions.

In particular the Hungarian Land Act of 2013 and the Provision on the Turnover of Agricultural and Forestry Lands, which entered into force on 1 May 2014, have led to bilateral irritation and negative media coverage in Austria. Based on these two legal acts, usage rights are retroactively declared terminated – which is tantamount to a de facto expropriation of Austrian farmers active in Hungary. In a letter of 16 October the European Commission requested a written statement by Hungary – as the first level of infringement proceedings under article 258 of the TFEU – in order to investigate the restriction of foreign investors’ rights to the use of agricultural areas.

The law on the taxation of advertising proceeds generated by the media, which entered into effect in August and provides for a progressive tax rate of up to 50 %, was massively criticised as interference with the freedom of the media.

Cooperation at regional level was further intensified. Austria and Hungary jointly and pro-actively contribute to regional cooperation programmes, for instance within the European Territorial Cooperation (ETC) or the European Structural and Investment Funds (ESI). Cooperation between Burgenland and Hungary in connection with the expansion of cross-border transport infrastructure saw a positive development. Supplementing the Memorandum of Understanding on the Comprehensive Development of Transport Links between Burgenland and Hungary of 17 July 2013, Province Governor Hans Niessl and State Secretary of Foreign Trade and Foreign Affairs Levente Magyar signed another joint Memorandum of Understanding on the comprehensive and sustainable development of cross-border transport links on 15 October. These projects are to be financed mainly through EU co-funding in the context of the Operational Programme on Cross-border Cooperation Austria-Hungary 2014–2020.
Austria contributed four bilateral projects to the events organised in connection with the Hungarian “Holocaust Memorial Year 2014”.

### 3.1.1.3. South East Europe / Western Balkan countries

The Western Balkans is a priority of Austrian foreign policy. Austria therefore organised a Western Balkans Conference on 3 June held in the context of the foreign ministers meeting during its Presidency of the Central European Initiative (CEI) (see Chapter 5.2.). Chaired by Federal Minister Sebastian Kurz, the foreign ministers of all Western Balkan states, a number of EU Member States and international organisations active in the region participated in the meeting. At this conference, the European perspective for all countries in the Western Balkans was again re-iterated. Likewise, the Western Balkan states were represented, mostly by their Prime Ministers, at the CEI summit on 24 November.

#### 3.1.1.3.1. Albania

In September the opposition started to boycott parliament. The reasons given by the opposition for this move were the infringements of Parliament’s rules of procedure by the governing majority and the half-hearted condemnation of assaults by MPs of the governing party (SP) on the part of Prime Minister Edi Rama. Against this background, the implementation of reforms proved difficult.

On 26 June, the EU Member States followed the recommendation by the European Commission of 4 June 2006, and recognising the reforms implemented so far awarded Albania candidate status. In the context of the Western Balkans Conference on 3 June, Austria had initiated a support letter to High Representative Ashton and the Greek Council Presidency, which was signed by 17 EU foreign ministers.

From 10 to 11 November, Prime Minister Edi Rama was the first Albanian Head of Government in almost 70 years to visit his Serbian counterpart Aleksandar Vučić in Belgrade. At the final press conference, however, Edi Rama called on Serbia to recognise Kosovo, which met with resentment from Serbia. The lead-up to the meeting was overshadowed by riots at a football match between the two countries on 14 October.

Albania is a priority country of Austrian development cooperation. Federal President Heinz Fischer paid a working visit to Albania in May. In the context of a common working visit on 17 June, Federal Minister Sebastian Kurz and Federal Minister Wolfgang Brandstetter met Prime Minister Edi Rama, Speaker of Parliament Ilir Meta and Foreign Minister Ditmir Bushati.

#### 3.1.1.3.2. Bosnia and Herzegovina

A wave of protests triggered by bankruptcy proceedings of five local companies was launched in the north-eastern industrial city of Tuzla on 4 February.
The protests subsequently transformed into violent unrest in more than 20 further cities across the country, reflecting the population’s deep dissatisfaction with the political and economic situation. For the first time since the end of the war in 1995, citizens’ fora ("plena") were formed, organised and supported by civil society. Except for the take-over of the government in the Tuzla Canton and the resignation of some local politicians, the movement, which was manifested mainly in the Federation entity, has, however, not succeeded in exercising sustainable political influence. In cooperation with the Ludwig Boltzmann Institute of Human Rights and other partners, the MFA prepared a support programme for the citizens’ fora, which led to the organisation of a conference (held in Vienna from 7 to 10 September) and coordination meetings in Sarajevo.

Together with the Hungarian Foreign Minister Janos Martonyi, Federal Minister Sebastian Kurz paid a working visit to Bosnia and Herzegovina on 27 March.

On 12 October elections were held to the State Parliament, the Federation Parliament and the State Presidency. Cantonal elections were also held. The new State Presidency is composed of three representatives of the constitutive ethnic groups Bakir Îzetbegović, Mladen Ivanić and Dragan Ćović. The election results generally strengthened the ethnic oriented parties of Croatians and Bosniaks in the Federation, and thus nationwide, while the party led by Milorad Dodik in the Republika Srpska was weakened and now holds only a narrow majority. Dodik, however, again became President of the entity Republika Srpska. As a new party, the Democratic Front was able to position itself successfully as an alternative to the Social Democrats; the “Union for a Better Future” of the former Minister of Security and media tycoon Fahrudin Radončić emerged slightly strengthened from the elections. At the end of 2014 the various government formations had not yet been completed.

In November, Germany and the United Kingdom launched an initiative to revive the EU integration and reform process. During their trip to Sarajevo in December, High Representative Federica Mogherini and Commissioner Johannes Hahn confirmed that the EU conditionalities would not change and that the EU perspective continued to be upheld.

Since 2009, Austria has contributed to the military CSDP operation for the stabilisation of the region, EUFOR Althea, and with about 200 personnel has also been the largest provider of troops to the mission since September 2013. Since December, Major General Johann Luif has held the position of Commander of EUFOR Althea. On 11 November, the UNSC convened to deliberate in its semi-annual meeting on the situation and extended the mandate for EUFOR Althea by another year. In the lead-up to the session Russia threatened to veto it but eventually abstained from voting. This meant that for the first time the extension of the mandate had thus not been unanimously adopted.
In mid-May 2014, Bosnia and Herzegovina was hit by a devastating flood disaster, which directly and/or indirectly affected about one million people. It claimed 25 lives, 10,000 people lost their homes and 89,000 individuals were forced to leave their homes at least temporarily. On 16 and 17 July, a donors’ conference for Bosnia and Herzegovina as well as for the likewise affected Serbia was held in Brussels (see Chapter 9.1.1.).

On the occasion of the commemorative year marking the beginning of the First World War, a concert by the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra was held in Sarajevo on 28 June in which Federal President Heinz Fischer also participated. The events organised in connection with the commemorative year, however, reflected the fact that the assassination of the heir to the throne of the Habsburg Monarchy is still being assessed in completely different ways by the different ethnic groups. Apart from a wreath-laying ceremony at the memorial for all soldiers of the Austro-Hungarian Dual Monarchy who had died in action, which was organised by the Austrian embassy, not a single common inter-ethnic or cross-entity commemorative event was held.

3.1.1.3.3. Kosovo

The early parliamentary elections on 8 June were won by the governing party PDK led by Prime Minister Hashim Thaçi, followed by the LDK under Isa Mustafa. The majority of the votes cast by the Kosovo Serbs went to the Srpska list. The elections were well-prepared and conducted without any incidents. Due to a stalemate between the LDK and the PDK, attributable to a constitutional-policy dispute, it took until 12 December for the new government to be formed. Isa Mustafa (LDK, previously mayor of Pristina) became new Prime Minister and former Prime Minister Hashim Thaçi assumed the offices of Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister while Kadri Veseli (PDK) was made Speaker of Parliament. For the first time ever, a system of guaranteed seats for minorities is provided for in the forthcoming legislative period. According to this scheme, the Serbian minority is in any event entitled to ten seats (previously 13) in Parliament but may get additional seats provided it wins an appropriate number of votes.

In 2014, the number of states that have recognised Kosovo as an independent state increased to 108. On 11 June, the Council of Europe took the decision to include Kosovo in its Venice Commission, with the United Kingdom, Germany and Austria making a decisive contribution to this effect.

Following the withdrawal of the French troops from Kosovo in the middle of the year, Austria decided to increase its contingent by about 120 personnel and is represented in the NATO/PfP operation Kosovo Force (KFOR) with the largest contingent provided by a non-NATO member (about 530 individuals). Brigadier General Anton Waldner holds the position of Deputy Commander.

The European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo (EULEX) assists the Kosovar institutions in building up a functioning legal, police, customs and
Europe

judicial system – and is the largest CSDP mission to date. Austria seconded 12 experts, especially from the fields of police forces, judiciary and human rights as well as one diplomat as chief of staff to EULEX Kosovo.

Under substantial international pressure (from the EU and the USA), the Kosovar Parliament on 23 April took two important decisions relating to the transformation and extension of the EULEX mandate until 15 June 2016 and on setting up a tribunal for the indictment of suspects relating to allegations from the Dick Marty CoE report (trade in human organs, war crimes, etc.), which were investigated by the Special Investigation Task Force (SITF) headed by Clint Williamson. In November, EU HR Federica Mogherini launched an independent investigation by EULEX Kosovo with respect to allegations of corruption.

With some 600 staff – including seven Austrians – the OSCE maintains the largest mission in Kosovo. Headed by Jean Claude Schlumberger, it focuses on supporting the Kosovar institutions, monitoring, human rights as well as the protection and promotion of human rights.

Bilateral relations are marked by frequently held bilateral meetings. In February, Federal Minister Sebastian Kurz paid a working visit to Kosovo. Austria was active in the context of three twinning projects on reintegration, anti-discrimination and education. Kosovo is also a priority country of Austrian development cooperation.

3.1.1.3.4. Macedonia

Both elections held on 27 April were won by the governing party VMRO-DPMNE. It remained victorious not only in the second ballot of the presidential elections but also in the early parliamentary elections, winning 61 out of the 123 seats in parliament. Its previous Albanian coalition partner DUI, which secured 19 seats, did better than in the elections held in 2011. As expected, the candidate of the VMRO-DPMNE, Gjorge Ivanov, was able to win the run-off election against Stevo Pendarovski (SDSM). The ballot in principle met the provisions defined by ODIHR. During the election campaign, however, irregularities had been observed including, for instance, disproportionate media presence of the candidates in favour of the governing parties’ candidates, lack of transparency in preparing the electoral rolls and intimidation of voter groups. These deficits were eventually instrumental to the SDSM’s announcement that it would not recognise the election and thus not take up the 34 seats it had won.

At these elections Christine Muttonen, member of the Austrian National Council, was Special Coordinator of the OSCE election observation mission. As head of the election observation delegation of the CoE, Stefan Schennach, member of the Austrian Federal Council, was mandated with observing and monitoring the elections.
Over the course of the year there were two serious interethnic incidents, the latest incident in July involving violent riots, injured individuals and arrests.

3.1.1.3.5. Montenegro

The governing DPS emerged from the local elections, held on 25 May in 12 of the 23 Montenegrin communities, as the strongest political power. The SDP, its coalition partner at national level and the opposition party Democratic Front (DF), however, lost votes.

In spite of difficulties, Montenegro continued on its course towards Euro-Atlantic integration. Accession negotiations with the EU were opened in June 2012. Since then, nine further negotiation chapters have been opened, including chapter 31 (foreign, security and defence policy).

As noted in the European Commission’s Progress Report of 8 October, the country still needs to catch up on combatting organised crime and corruption, including at high level. Although the independence of justice is substantively safeguarded under constitutional law, it is not consistently implemented in practice. Room for improvement was also determined with respect to the protection of journalists.

Montenegrin foreign policy was marked by constructive neighbourhood policy and regional cooperation.

A visible expression of the close relations between Austria and Montenegro was the official visit paid by Federal President Heinz Fischer to the country on 21 May. Austrian companies are among the most important investors in Montenegro.

3.1.1.3.6. Serbia

The early parliamentary elections on 16 March were conducted in a calm atmosphere and resulted in a landslide victory for the Serbian Progress Party (SNS) led by the then Deputy Prime Minister Aleksandar Vučić. The SNS succeeded in more than doubling its seats from 73 to 157 (out of a total of 250). Alongside the SNS only three further parties succeeded in winning parliamentary seats: the SPS (Prime Minister Ivica Dačić), the DS (Dragan Djilas) and the NDS (as of 4 October: SDP, Boris Tadić), which had split from the DS only in January. Aleksandar Vučić took over the office of Prime Minister, while the current PM Ivica Dačić (SPS) became Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister.

The priorities defined by the new government include improving the economic situation (stagnation since 2009, unemployment rate of 25 %) as well as accession to the EU. The accession negotiations were opened on 21 January, key criteria for opening negotiation chapters remain visible and sustainable progress with regard to relations with Kosovo. Apart from improving
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relations with Kosovo, reforms of the judiciary represent the most important challenge to the EU accession process.

Federal Minister Sebastian Kurz attended the opening of the country’s EU accession negotiations in Brussels on 21 January and paid official working visits to Serbia in February and in October.

In the middle of May, Central and West Serbia were ravaged by a flood disaster. More than 30,000 people had to be evacuated and accommodated in 140 reception camps. More than 760 houses and 10 % of agricultural land were destroyed. From the onset of the disaster, Austria provided comprehensive assistance. In the context of the immediate disaster relief coordinated by the Federal Ministry of the Interior, 108 Austrian helpers were active in Serbia (see Chapter 9.1.1.).

The commemorative year marking the centennial of the outbreak of the First World War led in the first half of the year to heated public discussions on the issue of responsibility for the war and the hypothesis of a “revisionism” of the Western world directed against Serbia. Due to the – in its view – “anti-Serbian character” of the commemorative events, the leading representatives of the Serbian State refrained from travelling to Sarajevo on 28 June. A differentiated, critical discussion of the topic in Austria as well as an intensive dialogue with Serbia were, however, able to relax the situation and translated in joint commemorative events in Serbia.

3.1.2. Turkey

The year was marked by the municipal elections in March, which resulted in a nationwide majority of votes of 42.9 % for the governing Justice and Development Party (AKP), which has been in power since 2002. Another important event were the presidential elections in August in which the incumbent Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan (AKP) emerged with 51.8 % as the country’s first directly elected president. The elections resulted in several government reshuffles. After President Erdoğan had been sworn in on 28 August, former Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu became Prime Minister and Chairman of the AKP. At domestic policy level, the agenda continued to be dominated by the Kurdish Issue (particularly in the regional context) – whose resolution process did not produce any tangible progress in 2014 –, rule of law and human rights issues, especially freedom of the press and of religion, as well as the position of the military in the state’s organisational structure and in politics. Despite progress achieved in the field of restitution of property to religious minorities and the re-opening of churches as well as efforts towards inter-religious dialogue, there is still significant need for reform, for instance with respect to the recognition of religious communities. The tensions between the government and the Fethullah Gülen movement were mounting and led to arrests as well as to massive radical changes in the media, the police forces and the judiciary and at administrative level.
These measures translated into a general slow-down of the democratisation and reform processes, were clearly criticised especially by the EU and put a strain on bilateral as well as EU cooperation.

Apart from the EU rapprochement process (1963 Association Agreement, 1995 customs union, 1999 accession candidate status, 2005 start of accession negotiations), Turkey, which has been a member of the Council of Europe since 1949 and of NATO since 1952, is closely integrated in European and/or western structures. After a further chapter had been opened in the EU accession process in November 2013, the year 2014 only saw progress at technical dialogue level. The signing of the readmission agreement on 16 December 2013 and its ratification on 26 June, marked the beginning of the dialogue on visa liberalisation with the EU.

Turkey’s geo-strategic position at the interface between the Middle East, Central Asia and Europe requires an increasingly multipolar focus of its foreign policy and enhanced commitment within the multi-lateral framework. The special relations between Turkey and the states of the Caucasus region and Central Asia are based on linguistic and cultural commonalities. Turkey assumes a bridging function between the region’s energy reserves and the energy markets in Europe, and is an interface for the latter’s supply security. In the Ukraine-Russia crisis, Turkey did not support the EU’s position and sought to intensify its relations with Russia. The intensification of political and economic relations that commenced in the aftermath of the transformations in the Arab region with some states in this area has again waned. The tensions with Egypt and Israel persist; the situation in Syria is a challenge for Turkey, inter alia because of the associated influx of refugees and the transnational activities of the terrorist organisation ISIL/Da‘esh. The Balkans are a zone of historic-cultural, economic but also political commitment for Turkey. It participates with 600 military staff and civilian personnel in the peace missions in Bosnia and Herzegovina and in Kosovo. By way of trilateral meetings, Turkey has over the last few years striven to promote reconciliation among former conflicting parties in the Balkans at large.

After having achieved impressive economic growth both in 2010 and 2011, the Turkish economy experienced something of a slowdown in 2012, picking up again in 2013, registering growth of 4.1 %. In 2014, the country’s growth rate stood at approximately 2.9 %. Through the customs union, Turkey has close economic ties with Europe. With almost 40 % in terms of trade volume and 80 % of direct investments, the EU is by far the country’s largest economic partner, although trade relations with the Middle East and North Africa have become increasingly important. With a coordinated opening of new embassies, foreign schools and Turkish Airlines routes, Turkey aims to tap into new markets in Africa, Asia and Latin America.

From 2009 to 2011, Austria ranked first among the largest foreign investors in Turkey and occupied the fifth rank in 2013. The bilateral volume of trade rose from 2.44 billion euros in 2013 to 2.47 billion euros in 2014.
Europe

3.1.3. Cyprus

By adopting resolution 2135 (2014) on 30 January and resolution 2168 (2014) on 30 July, the UNSC extended the mandate of the UN Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP) for half a year each, after holding non-public sessions with the troop contributing states, including Austria. The situation in the buffer zone was calm and stable; from autumn onwards the UN worked towards atmospheric rapprochement between the leaderships of the opposing troops.

Following the adoption of a Joint Declaration by the two ethnic group leaders on 11 February, the Cyprus negotiations gained new momentum, which continued until the summer. In September, former Norwegian Foreign Minister Espen Barth Eide took over as Special Adviser to the UN Secretary-General on Cyprus. At the beginning of October, President Anastasiades suspended the talks as Turkey had decided to launch seismic surveys within the Exclusive Economic Zone of the Republic of Cyprus lasting until the end of the year.

3.1.4. Russia

For Russia, the year was marked by the Ukraine crisis – both at foreign and at domestic policy level. In response to the annexation of the Crimea (see Chapter 3.1.5.1.), the European Council on 6 March adopted a three-stage plan for sanctions in connection with the conflict in Ukraine. The first stage covers the suspension of bilateral talks between the EU and Russia on visa matters and on the “New Agreement”; the second stage consists of the cancellation of the regular EU-Russia summits (the last such summit took place on 28 January) and of summits between EU Member States and Russia, an entry ban and asset freezes, while economic sanctions are provided for under stage three.

Economic sanctions were imposed by the EU – again at European Council level – following the escalation of the situation in eastern Ukraine and the downing of a Malaysian passenger plane on 31 July. The sanctions thus in force cover (1.) restricted access to the European capital market for largely state-owned Russian banks; (2.) an arms embargo, (3.) an embargo on dual use goods and (4.) an embargo on sensitive technologies. On 8 September these sanctions were further tightened. Furthermore, the activities of the European Investment Bank (EIB) and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) were put on hold in Russia. Based on these measures, the EU seeks to create the necessary pressure required for achieving a political solution. In response, Russia on 6 August adopted sanctions against agricultural exports from the EU and other states that had also imposed sanctions against Russia.

At OSCE level, the Swiss OSCE Chairmanship succeeded in establishing – alongside the ongoing deliberations on the crisis in Vienna – the Special
Monitoring Mission to Ukraine and the Trilateral Contact Group for political
dialogue as essential elements for resolving the crisis in a consensual manner
with Russia.

At the same time, the EU also continued its efforts towards establishing
dialogue with Russia. Mediated by the European Commission, for instance,
Ukraine and Russia on 30 October signed an agreement on gas supplies to
Ukraine in which the settlement of outstanding debt and the payment for
future deliveries was defined. Regular talks are furthermore being held in
the “Normandy format” between Russia, Ukraine, Germany and France at
foreign ministers’ and Heads of Government level.

Political insecurity and falling oil prices left their marks on the Russian econ-
omy and put the currency under pressure; by the end of the year the rouble-
euro exchange rate had dropped considerably from 45 to 75 roubles per euro.
In the course of the year the Russian foreign currency reserves declined by
approximately 20 %. On 16 December, the Russian Central Bank increased
the key interest rate overnight from 10.5 % to 17 %. In several addresses,
President Vladimir Putin prepared Russian citizens for difficult times ahead.

In Russia approval rates for President Putin increased substantially, espe-
cially following the annexation of the Crimea. The governing party “United
Russia” was also able to maintain its dominant position in the nationwide
elections (governors, regional and city parliaments) held in September 2014.

In May, Belarus, Kazakhstan and Russia signed the agreement on the estab-
lishment of the Eurasian Economic Union, which will enter into force on 1
January 2015; Armenia and Kyrgyzstan plan to join the union. By signing the
agreement, the contracting parties established a common market with a com-
mon policy in economic areas.

During his state visit to Turkey, President Putin, together with Gazprom head
Alexej Miller, announced on 1 December that Russia was no longer inter-
ested in the construction of the South-Stream pipeline. This pipeline would
have transported Russian natural gas via Russia, Bulgaria, Serbia and Hun-
gary to Baumgarten in Lower Austria.

The XXII Olympic Winter Games held in Sochi from 8 to 23 February, gave
rise to criticism by the public, NGOs and civil society about the human rights
situation in Russia. In addition to the laws adopted in 2012 and 2013, further
measures were taken that made life (i.e. survival) for NGOs in Russia increas-
ingly difficult. On 24 February, seven “Bolotnaya” activists were sentenced
to between two and a half and four years of imprisonment for “incitement to
mass disorder”. On 30 December, the opposition politician Alexej Nawalnij
was given a suspended sentence while his brother was sentenced to impris-
onment.

At bilateral level, several meetings were held between Austrian and Russian
politicians in the context of which the solution to the Ukraine crisis always
played a preeminent role. The highest-level level visit was the one paid by President Vladimir Putin to Austria on 24 June.

As part of the “Österreichisch-Russischen Kultursaisonen” (Austro-Russian cultural seasons), 50 projects with a relation to Austria were realised in 17 Russian cities.

3.1.5. Other Eastern European States

3.1.5.1. Ukraine

The protests on Kiev’s central Maidan Square, which had started in November 2013, came to a head from 19 to 22 January following the adoption of a package of restrictive laws relating especially to freedom of expression and freedom of assembly as well as to the immunity of members of parliament. On 27 January, opposition and government agreed on repealing the majority of the controversial laws and on an amnesty for demonstrators provided occupied key buildings were handed over. Demonstrations, however, continued nevertheless and resulted in heavy clashes on 18 and 20 February, which claimed more than 100 lives. On 20 February – the same day that the Extraordinary Foreign Relations Council convened in Brussels – the Foreign Ministers of Germany, France and Poland succeeded in reaching a peace agreement with President Victor Yanukovych and the opposition leaders involved in the protests. This agreement inter alia provided for the return to the constitution of 2004, the formation of a coalition government within 10 days and presidential elections to be held before the end of the year. Ongoing protests by demonstrators, some of whom were willing to resort to violence (especially representatives of the right-wing sector), and a generally unmanageable situation might have led Yanukovych to leave Kiev surprisingly within a few hours of having signed the agreement on 21 February. The next day, on 22 February, he told Parliament in a phone call that he had signed his resignation – a declaration which he, however, revoked only a little later. In response, the Ukrainian Parliament declared Yanukovych unfit for office and decided that early presidential elections would be held on 25 May. In line with the constitution of 2004, the Speaker of Parliament Alexander Turchynov was designated acting interim President. On 27 February, a new government led by Prime Minister Arseniy Yatsenyuk (from Yulia Tymoshenko’s “Fatherland” party) was elected to office by the Ukrainian parliament. This interim government was formed by members of the all-Ukrainian union “Fatherland”, the nationalist and anti-Russian movement SVOBODA and independent representatives of the Maidan movement.

On 27 February – after the occupation of the government buildings in the Crimean capital Simferopol by armed men in military fatigues – the parliament of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea in the presence of armed men in military fatigues ousted the local government and elected the party
leader of “Russian Unity on the Crimea”, Sergey Aksyonov, as “Prime Min-
ister”. After Sergey Aksyonov had issued a request for assistance to Rus-
sia in order to protect the Russian-speaking population on the Crimea, the
Lower House of the Russian Parliament on 1 March issued a call for assisting
the newly appointed “government” on the Crimea. On the request of the
Russian President, the Russian Federation Council granted its approval for
the deployment of Russian military units on the entire national territory of
Ukraine in order to protect Russian compatriots. In the meantime, Ukrainian
institutions stated that the events on the Crimea were illegal. After strategi-
cally important facilities had been seized, Ukrainian military installations
and facilities blocked, all Ukrainian TV channels switched off and access
denied to international monitoring missions, a referendum on joining Russia
was held on 16 March. At a reported turnout of 83 %, a purported share of
96.77 % of the Crimean population voted in favour of joining Russia, which
was subsequently confirmed by the Russian parliament on 21 March. Since
then the human rights situation on the peninsula, and especially that of the
Crimean tartars, has deteriorated substantially according to international
human rights reports. The EU considers this annexation of the Crimea a vio-
lation of international law – and in line with its non-recognition policy, the
EU adopted an import ban on goods originating from the Crimea, a trade and
investment ban with respect to infrastructure and mineral resources, as well
as a ban on the provision of technical assistance. Furthermore, sanctions
were adopted against individuals who jeopardise the territorial integrity of
Ukraine (see Chapter 3.1.4.).

From the middle of March onwards there was a concentration of Russian
troops along the South-East Ukrainian-Russian border. The international
community reacted in the context of the OSCE at the end of March by
establishing a special monitoring mission mandated with monitoring and
reporting on the situation in Ukraine and supporting dialogue. On 6 April,
public buildings in the East-Ukrainian oblast capitals Kharkiv, Donetsk and
Lugansk were seized. There were also clashes between pro-Ukrainian and
pro-Russian activists. On 7 April, the “Donetsk People’s Republic” and the
“Lugansk People’s Republic” were proclaimed. While the Ukrainian authori-
ties succeeded in quickly establishing control in the oblasts Kharkiv and
Mykolaiv, parts of the oblasts of Lugansk and Donetsk developed into separa-
tist units to which Russia provides both military, personnel and communica-
tion technology support.

On 13 April, the Ukrainian authorities started an anti-terror operation in the
East. Although the Ukrainian armed forces succeeded in considerably weak-
ening the separatists by mid-August, the latter were able to avert defeat. On
25 May, Petro Poroshenko was elected new President, winning 54.7 % in the
first ballot. In June, he presented a peace plan and sent out signals towards
the East. In this spirit, a law on the special status of Donetsk and Lugansk
was adopted granting large-scale autonomy rights to the two oblasts.
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The downing of a civilian aircraft of Malaysia Airlines above the region controlled by the separatists on 17 July, which claimed 298 lives, added an international dimension to the military conflict. The first ever economic sanctions imposed against Russia in connection with the developments in eastern Ukraine were adopted on 31 July (also see Chapter 3.1.4.).

In the course of the summer, the situation deteriorated further still. In the talks held in Minsk on 5 September, the Trilateral Contact Group, set up in the OSCE context and composed of representatives of Russia, Ukraine, the OSCE (Special Envoy Heidi Tagliavini) involving the participation of representatives of the “people’s republics” of Donetsk and Lugansk, succeeded in negotiating a peace agreement including a cease fire. The agreement (Minsk Protocol) was supplemented by a more specific memorandum on 20 September. The two Minsk agreements form the basis for concrete peace negotiations.

In the parliamentary elections held in Ukraine on 26 October, 423 of the 450 MPs were elected. Due to the Russian annexation and/or fighting it was not possible to hold elections in 27 constituencies in the East. Six parties were able to pass the 5 % hurdle: People’s Front (22 %), Petro Poroshenko Bloc (22 %), Self Reliance (11 %), Opposition Bloc (9 %), Radical Party (7 %) and Batkivtschyna “Fatherland” (6 %). Based on direct mandates, the Poroshenko Bloc won 132 seats, followed by the People’s Front with 82 seats and Self Reliance with 34. The turnout stood at 53 %. In their evaluation, international election observers described the election process as very positive. On 2 December, the Ukrainian Parliament confirmed the new cabinet of ministers proposed by the governing coalition (Petro Poroshenko Bloc, People’s Front, Self Reliance, Radical Party, Batkivtschyna) with 288 votes in favour, after having confirmed Prime Minister Arseniy Yatsenyuk in office in the constituent meeting held on 27 November.

The parliamentary elections were boycotted by the regions of Donetsk and Lugansk, controlled by separatists who conducted separate “presidential and parliamentary elections” on 2 November, which further aggravated the situation. The Ukrainian government revoked the special status act and stopped paying social benefits in the occupied regions in the East (although their payment had in fact already been impacted by the lack of government structures). According to figures from the UNHCR, the armed clashes in eastern Ukraine had by the end of 2014 claimed more than 4,700 lives, at least 600,000 internally displaced persons, and large numbers of people had fled to neighbouring countries, mainly to Russia.

The Ukrainian economy was massively impacted by the year’s events. Economic output shrunk by 7.5 % and the inflation rate went up to 21 %. Foreign exchange reserves dropped by more than half. The EU share in foreign direct investments amounts to almost 80 %. Together with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and other states the EU agreed on a large-scale support programme.
Ukraine is a priority country within the European Neighbourhood Policy and participates in the EU’s Eastern Partnership programme. On 21 March, the EU and Ukraine signed the political chapters of the Association Agreement, which had been postponed the previous year by the then President Yanukovych. The remaining economic section including the comprehensive free trade agreement was signed on 27 June. On 16 September, the Association Agreement was signed by the Ukrainian Parliament and the European Parliament in simultaneous meetings. Prior to that, the EU, Russia and Ukraine had agreed in trilateral consultations that the free trade agreement will not enter into force before the beginning of 2016. In April, the EU adopted autonomous trade measures to facilitate access to the European Single Market for Ukrainian companies.

Austria supported Ukraine in a number of ways. In March and from September to November, several injured persons were, for instance, treated in hospitals in Vienna and Lower Austria. At the request of the city council of Lviv, the Federal Ministry of the Interior provided medication and transportation thereof worth 60,000 euros. In September, humanitarian assistance of 500,000 euros from the Foreign Disaster Relief Fund was made available via the UNHCR. The Austrian Red Cross distributed food packages for families affected by the hostilities, which were co-funded with 200,000 euros by the Austrian Development Agency. In December, the City of Vienna donated 40 hospital beds to the military hospital of Zaporizhia and the Medical University of Innsbruck initiated the hand-over of medical equipment to the military hospital of Lviv. Also in December, the organisation Global 2000 provided care to several hundred orphans from the Lugansk region. Arrangements were also made for 200 children from eastern Ukraine to spend winter holidays in Austria.

At political level, Austria undertook every effort towards settling the conflict. In the context of the Austrian CoE Chairmanship, Federal Minister Sebastian Kurz travelled twice to Ukraine in the first half of the year (9–10 March and 30 April). Together with CoE Secretary General Thorbjørn Jagland, he submitted a support package focusing on the rule of law, constitutional reform and minority rights to the Ukrainian transition government. The CoE Committee of Ministers meeting, in which 30 foreign ministers including from Ukraine and Russia, participated in Vienna on 6 May was dominated by the crisis in Ukraine. Austria supported – not only in its capacity as CoE Chairmanship – the efforts by the Swiss OSCE Chairperson-in-Office 2014, President Didier Burkhalter, aimed at setting up the OSCE Monitoring Mission and a Contact Group for political dialogue. On 3 and 7 June, Federal President Heinz Fischer met the newly elected Ukrainian President. Federal Minister Sebastian Kurz again visited Ukraine on 15 September. Federal Chancellor Werner Faymann travelled to Ukraine on 1 October and on the margins of the ASEM summit in Milan he met President Putin, President Poroshenko and the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office Burkhalter on 17 October. At the beginning
of December, Federal Minister Kurz again met his Ukrainian and Russian counterparts in Basel.

The OSCE is playing an increasingly important role in resolving the conflict. Austria seconded 14 persons to the OSCE Monitoring Mission and also took part in the OSCE Observation Mission that monitored the Ukrainian presidential elections on 25 May and the parliamentary elections on 26 October (for further information on the OSCE also see Chapter 4.2).

Austria also supports the establishment of a civilian EU Mission aimed at strengthening the rule of law and supporting security sector reform.

3.1.5.2. Moldova

The Association Agreement with the EU which also includes a deepened and comprehensive free trade agreement, was initialled in Vilnius on 29 November 2013, signed at the European Council of 27 June and provisionally entered into force on 1 September.

On 30 November, parliamentary elections were held in Moldova. The pro-Russian Socialist Party led by Igor Dodons won the majority of votes. The governing EU-oriented coalition formed by the Liberal Democratic Party, the Democratic Party and the Liberal Party, again secured a majority and sought to form a new government.

The frozen conflict in Transnistria that has been simmering for more than 20 years remains unresolved. In the course of the year, two negotiation rounds were held in the “5+2 format” in the OSCE context. The escalation of the crisis in Ukraine in August caused all other planned negotiation rounds to be cancelled.

The fact that Moldova decided in favour of Europe triggered enhanced support by the EU: on 3 March, for instance, the visa requirement was lifted for Moldovan citizens and prior to the signing of the Association Agreement the import of Moldovan wine had already been facilitated. By taking these measures, the EU strove to compensate for the trade restrictions imposed by Russia in response to Moldova’s refusal to join the Eurasian Customs Union. High-level visits paid by European top politicians, including by Federal President Heinz Fischer in November, added leverage to the relations between Moldova and the EU.

The OSCE Mission to Moldova strives to facilitate the process of a durable political solution in the Transnitria conflict. Another focus of its activities is human rights issues, democratisation, freedom of the media, fighting human trafficking and implementation of confidence-building measures.

Since 2004, Moldova has been one of the priority countries for Austrian Development Cooperation (ADC). The priorities of the current country strategy for Moldova 2010–2015 are water, vocational education and governance.
3.1.5.3. Belarus

In 2014, Belarus assumed a constructive and mediating role in the Ukraine crisis; Minsk was the venue for several negotiation rounds held by the Trilateral Contact Group (composed of representatives of the Russian Federation, Ukraine and the OSCE) on the crisis in Ukraine. On 5 September, the Minsk Protocol was signed which, although not yet completely implemented, has formed the basis for further negotiations.

The year 2015 will be dominated in Belarus by the presidential elections, which are expected to result in the re-election of incumbent President Alexander Lukashenko – his fifth since he took office in 1994.

In the human rights field, criticism is voiced inter alia with respect to lack of freedom of opinion and politically motivated arrests. What is more, Belarus continues to remain the only country in Europe where the death sentence is applied. Progress made in the human rights field and the country’s constructive Ukraine policy prompted the EU to start relaxing restrictions on Belarus. At the regular sanctions review in autumn, the EU for the first time deleted 24 individuals from the sanctions list and no new names were added to the list. Based on a suggestion by Austria, the European Commission and the EEAS developed practical proposals on how the EU and Belarus could further develop their mutual relations.

Although, the EU is currently not holding negotiations on an Association Agreement, negotiations on a visa facilitation agreement were launched in January. The EU continues to pursue a policy of closer cooperation in the context of the Eastern Partnership. This includes inter alia multilateral platforms, technical dialogues and support provided to civil society.

At bilateral level, Austria also took a number of positive steps. In September, political consultations as well as a seminar organised during Austria’s Presidency of the CEI (Central European Initiative) on synergies between the CEI and the Eastern Partnership were held in Minsk. Headed by the President of the Austrian Economic Chamber Christoph Leitl, the largest Austrian business mission to date involving 32 company representatives visited Belarus from 26 to 28 May. The eleventh meeting of the Austro-Belarusian mixed commission for bilateral foreign trade relations was also held in the context of this business mission. On 24 November Federal Minister Sebastian Kurz met his Belarusian counterpart, Foreign Minister Vladimir Makei in Vienna.

3.1.6. Southern Caucasus

3.1.6.1. Armenia

In the aftermath of Armenia’s decision not to sign the Association Agreement with the EU but rather to join the Eurasian Economic Union, Russian influence increased – which also manifested itself during the crisis in Ukraine. On 27 March, Armenia was among the states to vote against the UNGA resolu-
tion condemning the annexation of the Crimea by Russia. Armenia, however, maintained that its voting behaviour had not been directed against Ukraine but rather had to be considered as a precedence for the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. Armenia also adopted a similar pro-Russian attitude in the CoE. Although it had not signed the Association Agreement, Armenia seeks to finds ways and means for cooperating more closely with the EU.

Armenia is interested in continued good relations with Ukraine as there is a considerable Armenian diaspora in Ukraine – and also on the Crimea.

With respect to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, there were serious outbursts of violence along the Line of Contact claiming several lives on both sides at the end of July. A meeting between the President of Armenia and the President of Azerbaijan, which was arranged by Russian President Vladimir Putin and held in Sochi at the beginning of August, was for the time being able to somewhat de-escalate the situation. In the context of the OSCE Minsk Process another “summit” of the presidents of Armenia and Azerbaijan took place Paris on 27 October but did not generate any tangible results. The downing of an Armenian helicopter that was participating in large-scale military exercises on 12 November by Azerbaijan again highlighted the risk of more extensive military clashes at the Line of Contact.

A normalisation of relations with Turkey, striven for by Armenia, is thwarted by the unresolved Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. Turkey, which has traditionally supported the position of Azerbaijan, makes an opening of the borders to Armenia dependent on substantial progress being made in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.

Turkey is, however, in principle – especially also with a view to the 100th anniversary and the controversy regarding the recognition of the Armenian genocide – interested in improving its relations with the country. At the 99th anniversary, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan in his then capacity of Prime Minister made a statement in which he also expressed his sympathy for the Armenian victims, which was, however, rejected as insufficient by the official representatives of Armenia. Nevertheless, Foreign Minister Edward Nalbandian on 28 August participated in Recep Tayyip Erdoğan’s inauguration ceremony as President and extended an official invitation to him to participate in the central ceremony commemorating the 100th anniversary held in Yerevan on 24 April 2015. In return, the Armenian President was invited to the Turkish celebrations marking the 100th anniversary of the Battle of Gallipoli in April 2015.

In June, President Serzh Sargsyan paid an official visit to Austria. At the beginning of September, Federal Minister Sebastian Kurz visited Armenia and during his visit he also opened an ADA office together with his Armenian counterpart Edward Nalbandian. Armenia has been a priority country of Austrian Development Cooperation (ADC) for many years now.
3.1.6.2. Azerbaijan

Although Azerbaijan takes part in the EU’s Eastern Partnership, its intention is not to conclude an Association Agreement but rather to establish a strategic agreement with the EU. Critical statements made by Brussels regarding the deteriorating human rights situation and lack of democracy are regularly rejected by Azerbaijan as interference in the country’s internal affairs. Furthermore, Azerbaijan alleges that the EU has been lacking in commitment with respect to resolving the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, which – despite several meetings between the Armenian and Azerbaijani presidents facilitated by international mediation and the activities of the chair of the OSCE Minsk Group – produced hardly any progress. Throughout 2014 there were increasingly heavy clashes along the contested Line of Contact between Nagorno-Karabakh and Azerbaijan that claimed numerous lives. Referring to contributions towards resolving the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, Russia strives to persuade Azerbaijan to join the Eurasian Economic Union.

The visit paid by Federal Minister Kurz and a large Austrian business delegation to Baku on 11 and 12 September marked the highlight of bilateral relations. In the context of this visit Federal Minister Kurz not only met President of State Ilham Aliyev and Foreign Minister Elmar Mammadyarov but also civil society representatives.

3.1.6.3. Georgia

Following the armed conflict about South Ossetia and Abkhazia in 2008, Georgia broke off diplomatic relations with Russia and has, especially since the Ukraine crisis, made increasing efforts towards joining the EU and NATO. In the context of the Eastern Partnership, Georgia on 27 June signed an Association Agreement with the EU. The whole ratification process is to be completed by the time the Eastern Partnership summit takes place in Riga in May 2015. As is the case with other members of the EU’s Eastern Partnership, Russia is exercising pressure on Georgia in connection with the implementation of the agreement, which the EU seeks to mitigate by way of bilateral talks. The objective pursued by the EU in this context is to convince Russia of the benefits and positive impact of the agreement.

The conflict involving the two separatist entities Abkhazia and South Ossetia, which are recognised as independent states by Russia, remains unresolved. The Geneva talks that were established as a negotiation forum have so far failed to achieve any tangible progress. Austria contributes three police officers and five members of the Armed Forces to the EU Monitoring Mission (EUMM) in Georgia.

On 24 November, Russia and Abkhazia signed an Agreement on Alliance and Strategic Partnership. The agreement provides for joint defence activities and the “protection of the state border of the Republic of Abkhazia with Georgia”. In addition, Russia holds out the prospect of generous financial
support to the region. It is to be expected that South Ossetia too will sign a similar agreement with Russia.

Triggered by a government crisis at the beginning of November, the ministers of the Free Democrats party, which has a very Western focus, resigned along with Foreign Minister Maia Panjikidze and Defence Minister Irakli Alasanija. In spite of these resignations, the governing coalition retained its majority in parliament and continues to maintain a pro-European focus.

In 2011, Austria started to substantially strengthen its development cooperation with South Caucasus. A framework agreement, which defines Georgia as one of the Priority countries of Austrian Development Cooperation (ADC) was signed in March 2013. A coordination office was officially opened in Tbilisi on 24 October during a visit paid to the country by Secretary General for Foreign Affairs Michael Linhart. In the field of development cooperation, the main focus is on forestry, agriculture and regional development.

3.2. Africa and the African Union

3.2.1. General Developments

The year was marked by a further deepening of the inner-African gap between countries where there is peace and development policy success and others that are in the midst of highly critical developments. Cross-border challenges such as Ebola or phenomena like Boko Haram, for instance, also dominated the headlines in Austria. After a break of several years, an EU-Africa Summit was held in Brussels at the beginning of April at which Austria was represented by Federal Chancellor Faymann. This event, as well as the relevant preparatory work which had taken more than a year, provided an opportunity for deepening mutual understanding between Europe and Africa – which is particularly important against the background of the many challenges that need to be managed together.

3.2.1.1. EU-Africa

The Strategic Partnership between the EU and Africa is the most institutionalised partnership in Africa and focuses on promoting political dialogue and concrete action in areas of joint interest between equal partners. The EU-Africa Strategy, adopted at the Second EU-Africa Summit in Lisbon in 2007, defines the political framework for relations between the two partners. The Fourth EU-Africa Summit was held on 2 and 3 April in Brussels. Austria was represented by Federal Chancellor Werner Faymann. The topics addressed included peace and security, prosperity and people, and were discussed in three working sessions in a very open and positive atmosphere. In the preparations for the summit declarations, Austria supported the priority topics of protection of human rights, the rule of law, fighting impunity, promoting
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Economic growth and creation of jobs, especially also for young people. As a result of Austria’s relevant efforts it was possible to agree on a clear commitment on these topics in the summit declaration. Alongside the summit declaration, an implementation plan 2014–2017 and a declaration on migration and mobility were adopted which form the basis for further activities until the Fifth EU-Africa Summit in 2017.

Although countries in Africa tend to increasingly turn towards new partners in Asia, Latin America and the Arab region, the EU remains Africa’s largest trading partner. Cooperation was further expanded, in particular in the areas of peace and security, infrastructure and in the development sector. With EU NAVFOR Somalia – Operation Atalanta, the EU contributes to the fight against piracy off the coast of Somalia. In Somalia itself, the EU is still the largest donor to the ongoing AU Peace Mission AMISOM set up to restore safety, security and stability in South and Central Somalia. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the EU supports measures towards restoring peace, security and stability in the Great Lakes region and towards democratisation of the country (inter alia with the two ongoing CSDP missions EUSEC and EUPOL) and also supports measures towards fighting terrorism in the Sahel region. The EU does not only provide immediate humanitarian aid in crisis situations but also remains the most important donor of development aid in Africa. By the end of the year, the negotiations on three further regional economic agreements (Economic Partnership Agreements - EPAs) were completed: West Africa, Southern Africa and EAC (East African Community). The EU thus promotes trade between African states and EU Member States and contributes to improving framework conditions for investments in Africa.

3.2.2. Developments in the Regions

3.2.2.1. North Africa (Maghreb)

3.2.2.1.1. Egypt

The beginning of the year was marked by terrorist attacks and demonstrations in connection with the third anniversary of the revolution. In the course of the year the country was repeatedly shaken by further attacks and the human rights situation remained tense.

In a referendum held on 14 and 15 January, a new constitution was adopted by an overwhelming majority of votes, however, with a low turnout. The presidential elections held from 26 to 28 May were won by Field Marshall Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi. On his appointment, the new president also assumed legislative functions till the first parliamentary elections provided for under the road map. Since his inauguration on 8 June, enhanced efforts have been undertaken towards a reform of the financial sector and the economy, and towards attracting foreign investment in Egypt. Several large infrastructure
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projects, including the expansion of the Suez Canal were announced and some have already been launched.

The parliamentary elections scheduled for autumn were postponed until 2015. The majority of the Islamist parties and parts of the revolutionary movements were forbidden and thus excluded from political participation. The new electoral order is largely characterised by a majority voting system and reserves most of the seats for independent candidates, which means that a weakening of smaller parties seems very likely.

3.2.2.1.2. Algeria

On 17 April, the incumbent President Abdelaziz Bouteflika, who has been in office for 15 years, was re-elected for his fourth term. At domestic policy level the focus is currently being placed on social issues and the President’s state of health following a stroke. Works at a constitutional reform were continued. At economic level, priority was given to efforts aimed at increasing the country’s economic output and to a diversification of Algerian exports. This diversification was supported by Austrian expert knowledge made available under an EU Twinning Project. The instable security policy situation was dominated by the dangerous environment in Libya and the Sahel characterised by insurgent activity on the part of Islamist groups. Also with a view to its own security interests, Algerian diplomacy undertook committed efforts towards peaceful solutions for Libya and North Mali.

3.2.2.1.3. Libya

The persistently fragile security situation and the correspondingly unstable political situation led to an escalation in the political transition process towards democratic restructuring. After a vote of no-confidence, interim Prime Minister Ali Zeidan was replaced on 12 March by interim Prime Minister Abdullah Al-Thinni.

On 25 June elections were held. Although they were assessed as free and fair by the international community, voter turnout was very low and they did not contribute to easing the political crisis in Libya. Heavy clashes and fighting erupted in Tripoli in July, which resulted inter alia in the destruction of the international airport and the evacuation of many embassies, international organisations and foreigners. The decision in favour of constituting the internationally recognised House of Representatives in Tobruk prompted the General National Congress in Tripoli that had already dissolved, to reconstitute and to subsequently swear in a parallel government in Tripoli on 6 September. The internationally recognised government of Prime Minister Abdullah Al-Thinni was sworn in on 28 September.

Fighting in many parts of the country has led to a sharp decline in oil production and oil exports, which are vital for the country. Mediation efforts by the new UN Special Representative Bernardino Leon could not bring about
a breakthrough. By the end of the year, it was also not possible to complete the draft constitution.

3.2.2.1.4. Morocco
In its efforts towards the concrete shaping of the legislative framework defined by the new constitution of 2011, the government was only able to make slow headway. Most progress was made with regard to reform of the judiciary, regionalisation and modernisation of the education system. By hosting the Second World Human Rights Forum in Marrakesh, Morocco was able to raise its profile in the human rights field; at the same time, the Moroccan human rights policy – also under the new constitution – was criticised by non-governmental organisations. In the field of asylum and migration policy, certain groups of illegal immigrants were regularised; in parallel, however, the influx of migrants mainly from the Sahel and sub-Saharan Africa to the Spanish enclaves Ceuta and Melilla increased.

The worsening of the security situation in the Sahel prompted Morocco to step up its security precautions. Relations with Algeria remained strained. With respect to Western Sahara, Morocco, in no uncertain terms, insisted on its claim to sovereignty over this territory; relevant mediation efforts under the auspices of the UN failed to produce any tangible results. The EU and Morocco continued negotiations on a “comprehensive and deepened free trade agreement” and in parallel launched negotiations on a readmission and a visa facilitation agreement.

3.2.2.1.5. Tunisia
After the Larrayed administration was forced to resign as a result of the political crisis triggered by the assassination of the two opposition politicians Chokri Belaid and Mohamed Brahmi, a government of experts led by Prime Minister Mehdi Jomâa was installed on 29 January. Its main task was to prepare and conduct parliamentary and presidential elections.

The parliamentary elections were eventually successfully conducted on 26 October, the presidential elections on 23 November (first ballot) and on 21 December (second ballot). The party that emerged as the strongest from these elections was “Nidaa Tounes” led by Béji Caïd Essebsi, who subsequently also won the presidential elections and was sworn in on 31 December. While this marked the end of the transformation process, the Jomâa government was increasingly faced with the problem of Islamist terrorism – which had emerged as an issue at about the same time, and is very likely to remain a challenge in the foreseeable future.
3.2.2.2. The Horn of Africa and East Africa

3.2.2.2.1. Ethiopia

The Ethiopian government led by Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn consistently continued the course towards economic modernisation taken by Prime Minister Meles Zenawi who died in 2012. Improvements at economic and social level were conflicting with a clear deterioration in the human rights field, especially with a view to political rights and freedom of opinion. Numerous arrests were made, critical journalists and bloggers as well as opposition politicians were convicted and these sentences were regularly based on terrorism charges. Several journalists felt forced to leave the country. In spring, violent clashes between the police forces and demonstrating students in the Oromo region claimed several lives.

At foreign policy level, Ethiopia strove to continue to live up to its role of constructive regional power with respect to the conflicts in its neighbourhood. In this spirit Ethiopia continues to provide a considerable number of troops to the Peace Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) and in South Sudan, and mediates in the South Sudan conflict as chair in the regional organisation IGAD. In the second half of the year it was possible to noticeably ease the tense relationship with Egypt, which has been severely strained due to the GERD (Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam) on the River Nile, which Egypt considers as massively jeopardizing its Nile water interests but whose construction continues to be pursued by Ethiopia. This easing was attributable to an agreement reached with the new Egyptian leadership on comprehensive cooperation on open issues relating to the dam. No improvement was, however, achieved in the relations with Eritrea and in connection with the Ethiopian-Eritrean border conflict.

3.2.2.2.2. Eritrea

After massive crop failures in the previous year, the food supply situation somewhat recovered. Recourse to strategic oil resources also led to an easing of the energy situation. President Isaias Afwerki announced a constitutional process, of which little is known as yet. In the first half of the year, numerous new staffing decisions were taken at administrative systems’ level in order to make the political system more stable and efficient. The year was moreover marked by efforts towards establishing closer links with the international community and especially with some of the neighbouring states. It was possible to further foster the relationship with the UN. Talks on programme planning in connection with the 11th European Development Fund are also progressing.

Sheila Keetharuth, Special Rapporteur for Human Rights in Eritrea has so far not been allowed to enter the country. In June, she submitted her second, and once again, critical report. On 27 June, the Human Rights Council decided to establish a commission composed of three members and equipped with a
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one-year mandate in order to investigate human rights violations committed since 1991. The two additional members of the commission, who now support Keetharuth, were appointed on 26 September. From 21 to 24 January an OHCHR mission for the first time visited Asmara. For a future visit Eritrea held out the prospect of access to prisons and military training camps.

In a letter to the UNSC, the Monitoring Group on Somalia and Eritrea stated on 10 October that it had found no evidence of Eritrean support to Al-Shabaab. The Monitoring Group, however, assumes that support is being provided to irregular Ethiopian and Sudanese troops and that Eritrea has been violating the arms embargo, and criticises the regime’s lack of financial transparency. By adopting resolution 2182 (2014) on 24 October, the UNSC extended the mandate of the Sanctions and Monitoring Group. Eritrea’s influence on Somalia and the conflict with Djibouti are assessed as a threat to international peace. In view of Eritrea’s refusal to grant access to the Monitoring Group, the latter calls for better cooperation.

3.2.2.2.3. Kenya

At political level, the year was mainly marked by a wide-ranging standstill in the implementation of the government’s ambitious reform agenda and the proceedings before the International Criminal Court (ICC) against President Uhuru Kenyatta and his deputy William Ruto.

Government work primarily focuses on the implementation of the new constitution and thus the transfer of responsibilities from the federal level to the administrative level of the newly created counties. Apart from the burden on the budget, represented by the establishment of such a comprehensive additional administrative level, it also entails a struggle for responsibilities and competences, which the Kenyatta administration had still not been able to manage in its second year. Consequently, it had not been possible to launch a number of reforms, for instance in the educational sector, announced in the election campaign. With respect to other topics, including the controversial land issue, failure to deliver is mainly attributable to a lack of implementation.

One of the reasons is that both President Kenyatta and Vice President Ruto had to face trial before the ICC in The Hague for crimes against humanity. While proceedings against Vice President Ruto still continue, ICC Chief Prosecutor Fatou Bensouda filed a notice for withdrawal of charges against Kenyatta due to lack of evidence in December 2014.

Kenya remained the target of terrorist attacks. The country was shaken by several horrendous attacks, which were either attributed to the radical-Islamic Al-Shabaab militia based in Somalia, inter alia on the coast (Mpeketoni), or for which Al-Shabaab assumed responsibility, for instance at the border to Somalia (Mandera). There were frequent attempted terrorist attacks in the larger conurbations of Nairobi and Mombasa.
3.2.2.2.4. Somalia

At domestic policy level, the dominant features were internal strife and increasing tensions between the federal government in Mogadishu and the individual regions.

After many months of rivalry and mutual obstruction, the simmering dispute between President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud and Prime Minister Abdiweli Sheikh Ahmed escalated towards the end of the year, culminating in a motion of no confidence introduced by the National Assembly against Prime Minister Abdiweli. Just before the end of the year, the latter was replaced by Omar Abdirashid Ali Sharmarke, which made him the country’s third Prime Minister within the space of a year.

At security level, the troops deployed by the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) as well as the Somali armed forces were able to recapture some land from the Islamist Al-Shabaab militia in a joint offensive, but the latter continue to control extensive parts of South and Central Somalia. Al-Shabaab, however, continue to play a destabilising role – as illustrated by a number of suicide and bomb attacks launched within and outside of Somalia.

The relationship between the federal government and the various regional governments will also play a vital role with respect to the country’s further development: Abdiweli Mohamed Ali Gaas emerged as president following elections held in Puntland. Somaliland continues its efforts towards full autonomy and now issues passports exclusively for the – internationally not recognised – “Republic of Somaliland”. The main goal pursued by the government of Somaliland is the currently unpromising endeavour to be recognised as a sovereign state.

Economically, the region benefited mainly from transfers of the diaspora and major investments by international oil and gas exploration companies, investment made by Kuwait in the refurbishment of the airports in Berbera and Hargeisa as well as from major infrastructure investments in and surrounding the important harbour of Berbera made by Chinese companies.

The High Level Partnership Forum held in Copenhagen in November, which should have provided some kind of a stocktaking of the “New Deal Compact” adopted in 2013, was an important event for Somalia. However, due to domestic policy blockades, there was a lack of progress in many areas. In view of the fact that Somalia plans to hold the next presidential and legislative elections as early as 2016, the international community, led by the EU, urged the Somali government to adopt a joint and more decisive approach in implementing the necessary reforms.

The ongoing instability on the Horn of Africa was a recurring feature on the UNSC’s agenda and was intensively dealt with throughout the year. By adopting resolution 2142 (2014), the UNSC extended the partial lifting of the weapons embargo with respect to certain weapons, ammunition and training
for Somali government troops; and by adopting resolution 2158 (2014) on 29 May, it expanded and extended the mandate of the UN Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSOM) for one year. The mandates of the Sanctions Monitoring Group and the extension of the authorisation of the AU Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) by 30 November 2015 were adopted under resolution 2182 (2014) of 24 October. This resolution also includes adaptations of the sanctions regime, including the authorisation of ship inspections off the coast of Somalia with a view to implementing the arms embargo and the export ban on coal. In addition, the UNSC held related discussions focused on the humanitarian situation, allegations of sexual exploitation and offences against displaced women by AMISOM and travelled to Mogadishu on 13 August.

3.2.2.2.5. Sudan

Since 2013, the level of violence has clearly increased and especially so in South Kordofan and in Darfur. In February, Sudan activated paramilitary associations known as “Rapid Support Forces”. By the end of June, some 385,000 people had been displaced in Darfur alone. Following reports of mass rape in Thabit, North Darfur, on 30 and 31 October, the Sudanese government demanded the withdrawal of UNAMID and expelled two high-level UN officials. UNAMID’s current mandate expires on 30 June 2015.

In January, President Al Bashir called for a national dialogue involving all political forces. So far, the dialogue, however, only involves some of the political parties in Khartoum, while the leaders of other parties have been arrested. At the same time, a dialogue with the armed opposition was held, which was, however suspended until further notice on 5 December. The government now increasingly alleges that South Sudan is supporting the rebels. Besides, President Al Bashir stated that he was opposed to linking the negotiation process on Darfur with that for the “Two Regions”. Fighting again flared up at the end of the year.

At the general conference of the national Congress Party, held from 23 to 25 October, President Al Bashir was again elected party chairman and will also stand for president at the elections scheduled for April 2015. The government did not accept the opposition’s requests for an interim government and a postponement of the elections. Parliament is currently deliberating on a reform of the constitution based on which governors are to be appointed by the President instead of being elected.

In February, the Independent Expert of the Human Rights Council on Sudan, Mashood Baderin, visited the country. He stated that he had not noticed any improvements in the human rights situation since his report of September 2013. On 5 November, Aristide Nononsi was appointed as successor to Baderin.

On 27 August, the UNSC extended the mandate of the UN-AU Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID) until 30 June 2015 with reduced troop strength,
requesting the mission to focus on the protection of civilians and ensuring humanitarian access. The UNSC also dealt with a number of high-level expulsions of UN staff, calls by Sudan to withdraw UNAMID from Darfur, allegations of mass rapes against the Sudanese army in Darfur as well as the suppression of reports that were critical of Sudan by UNAMID. Both in June and in December, ICC Chief Prosecutor Bensouda criticised Sudan’s lack of cooperation with the ICC and the UNSC’s inactivity in this connection. The mandate of the Interim Security Forces for Abyei (UNISFA) was extended several times – most recently until 28 February 2015.

Thanks to good harvests and the development of the mining sector, the economic situation has improved. The high level of inflation, however, still remains a cause for concern.

3.2.2.2.6. South Sudan

The situation in the new Republic of South Sudan was completely overshadowed by the armed conflict that broke out in December 2013. The main opposing parties were the South Sudanese People’s Liberation Movement (SPLM) led by President of State Salva Kiir and the SPLM-In-Opposition (SPLM-IO) group that had split off from the latter and is led by the former Vice-President of South Sudan Riek Machar, although the conflict also involved other warring parties and groups.

Even though constantly renewed peace negotiations mediated by the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) were held in an ongoing manner in the Ethiopian capital Addis Ababa, they were not able to produce concrete results towards resolving the conflict in the reporting period. A ceasefire that was renewed several times and numerous other agreements were in fact co-adopted or also signed by the parties to the conflict, but, however, not observed. Additional negotiations under the auspices of Tanzania aimed at reaching settlement of the conflict between SPLM and SPLM-IO did not generate any success either by the end of the year. In December, the Peace and Security Council of the African Union (AU) decided to establish a high-level ad-hoc committee composed of one Head of State or Government of each of the five African regions. The committee has, however, not yet constituted itself and likewise a decision on sanctions for violating the ceasefire – which has already been the case – has not yet been adopted either.

As the agreements on ending hostilities, reached based on mediation efforts undertaken by IGAD, have been repeatedly violated by both parties, the humanitarian situation in South Sudan has been further exacerbated. According to estimates, the number of people killed in the conflict reached 50,000 by the end of the year. Based on UNHCR figures, 1.5 million people were internally displaced and 480,000 fled the country. Again in 2014, Austria supported the people of South Sudan by providing funding under the Foreign Disaster Relief Fund for the financing of humanitarian aid.
In view of the ongoing violence and the problematic humanitarian situation on the ground, the UNSC extended the mandate of the UN Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) until 30 May 2015.

3.2.2.3. Southern Africa

3.2.2.3.1. Angola

Against the background of its growing economy, Angola is increasing its political and economic presence not only in the SADC region but also in West Africa. At the end of June, for instance, State Secretary Manuel Augusto as the President’s Special Envoy visited Nigeria to offer support to the Nigerian Head of State in fighting Boko Haram.

Furthermore, Angola also offered its experience in domestic policy reconciliation following the end of its own civil war to the Central African Republic and indicated its readiness to provide financial assistance of 30 million US dollars for reforming and training the Central African Republic’s security forces and paying civil servants’ salaries.

The country’s most important foreign policy success was its election as non-permanent member to the UNSC for 2015/2016. In this context, Angola sees itself at the centre of the debate on peacekeeping and military interventions in Africa and supports a more active role assumed by African states. Its membership on the UNSC comes at a time of important challenges to be faced by the African regional organisations and the African Union (AU) inter alia with respect to Mali, Somalia and the Central African Republic.

3.2.2.3.2. Lesotho

The conflicts that have been building up within the coalition government since June 2012 led in June to the suspension of Parliament by King Letsie III at the request of the Prime Minister. At the end of August, tensions exploded and on the 30 and 31 of the month led to an – in the end unsuccessful – coup d’état by the army. In the course of this coup, assassination attempts were staged against the Prime Minister and the new Chief of the Army who were, however, both able to flee in time to South Africa.

With a view to calming the situation in the country, SADC stepped in and dispatched the South African Deputy President Cyril Ramaphosa as facilitator, who in the course of three negotiation rounds was able to bring about a compromise between the parties to the conflict. Based on this, early elections will be held in February 2015. SADC also dispatched police units from several member states, primarily from South Africa, to Lesotho in order to stabilise the situation.

3.2.2.3.3. Madagascar

The taking of office of President Hery Rajaonarimampianina on 25 January and the appointment of a new government led by Prime Minister Kolo Roger
in April marked the end of the transition phase under President Andry Rajoelina, who had toppled his predecessor Marc Ravalomanana.

On 13 October, former President Ravalomanana, who had lived in exile in South Africa since he was overthrown in 2009, returned to Madagascar in a cloak-and-dagger operation, whereupon he was arrested and placed under house arrest in the city of Antsiranana. After an SADC mission had failed in November, the association of Christian Churches in Madagascar launched a national reconciliation process, which was after some hesitation ultimately joined by President Rajaonarimampianina and his four predecessors. A first meeting between Rajaonarimampianina and his four predecessors was held on 19 December, which led to the release of political prisoners arrested during the Rajoelina era and to granting Marc Ravalomanana permission to return to his family in Antananarivo.

On 10 December, the death penalty was officially abolished after not a single death sentence had been executed since 1958.

### 3.2.2.3.4. Malawi

President Joyce Banda (People’s Party), whose political image had been severely tarnished by a fraud and corruption scandal that erupted last year, was voted out of office on 20 May after a fierce election campaign and subsequently withdrew from politics. Winning 36.4% of all votes, Peter Mutharika (DPP Party) was elected her successor.

President Mutharika is facing huge challenges: last years’ disastrous economic policy required a tough austerity course, while international donors’ trust had disappeared as a consequence of the “Cashgate” corruption scandal which had led several large donors to stop their payments to Malawi.

The struggle against corruption, regaining the international community’s trust as well as creating incentives for foreign investors thus top the President’s agenda. So far, however, the new government has not been able to agree on a comprehensive reform programme.

### 3.2.2.3.5. Mozambique

On 15 October, presidential and parliamentary elections as well as elections to the province parliaments were held in Mozambique. The framework for the elections was formed by the memorandum signed in September between the governing party FRELIMO and the largest opposition party RENAMO, which put an end to the armed conflict in the central region of Sofala that had lasted almost two years. It also enabled the leader of RENAMO, Afonso Dhlakama, to appear in public after almost two years and launch an active election campaign.

Winning 57% of the votes, the candidate of the FRELIMO party, Filipe Nyusi, emerged victoriously from the presidential elections. The picture was, how-
ever, a different one at the parliamentary elections in which the FRELIMO remained the strongest party, but lost its two-thirds majority. The oppositional MDM actually doubled its result but remained far short of expectations. The RENAMO, however, won an additional 38 seats.

Even before publication of the election results, RENAMO accused the government of serious electoral fraud. Dhlakama threatened not to recognise a FRELIMO government and called for a government of national unity. In the end, the parties agreed on establishing the new position of a leader of the opposition, which meant that an official office had also been provided for Dhlakama. Furthermore, RENAMO followers are to be integrated in the state apparatus – including the military and the police.

3.2.2.3.6. Zimbabwe

The most important political event was the preparation and the holding of the party congress of the governing ZANU-PF in Harare from 2 to 6 December at which some important decisions that set the country’s political course for the future, were taken. The topic that absolutely dominated the agenda was the regulation of the succession of long-term President Robert Mugabe. In the lead-up to the congress, potential successors to Mugabe had already fought a fierce in-party power struggle. At the party congress, the President’s wife, Grace Mugabe, was elected chairperson of the powerful ZANU-PF Women’s League and waged a fierce fight against her husband’s longstanding political companion Vice President Joice Mujuru. She was said to have had ambitions to become President and subsequently lost her seat on the ZANU-PF politbureau and was stripped of her function as Vice President. Together with Mujuru seven ministers who had been deemed her political allies were replaced. Two Vice Presidents were appointed as Mujuru’s successors: Minister of Justice Emmerson Mnangagwa and Phelekezela Mphoko.

3.2.2.3.7. South Africa

In the general elections of 7 May, the African National Congress (ANC) was able to defend its dominant position at national level by winning 249 of the 400 seats in parliament, but lost 15 seats and thus its two-third majority. The Democratic Alliance (DA) remained the strongest opposition party and was able to increase its seats from 22 to 89. It was followed by the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF) led by the former president of the ANC Youth League, Julius Malema, which stood for the first time and succeeded in winning 25 seats following its first-ever election campaign. It thus replaced COPE (Congress of the People – a former splitter of the ANC) as third-strongest opposition party. On 21 May, parliament elected Jacob Zuma for a second term as President after the public prosecutor’s office had withdrawn all allegations of corruption against him. The president is, however, still regularly faced with allegations of corruption and nepotism mainly by the opposition, inter alia
in connection with a major defence contract, the expansion of his private residence in Nkandla and for allowing friends to use a military airport.

Reaching economic growth levels of only 1.4%, South Africa was not able to sustainably reduce poverty in the country and create jobs. The poor growth rates were attributable to the weak global economic situation, but also to other factors including energy shortage and regular power cuts, poor education and training, unsatisfactory administration, excessively long strikes and high wage demands.

3.2.2.4. The Great Lakes Region

3.2.2.4.1. Burundi

Burundi continued to present itself as a post-conflict country that is still largely dependent on donors and in which the process of coming to terms with the decade-long, ethnically motivated civil wars has so far been hardly launched. The governing party “Conseil national pour la défense de la démocratie/Forces pour la défense de la démocratie (CNDD-FDD)” continues to have comprehensive control of the country and enjoys large-scale popular support, particularly in the rural regions, which is mainly attributable to the opposition’s weakness. The role played by the party’s youth organisation, known as Imbonerakure, is considered especially problematic as it is held responsible for violent attacks on the opposition and on NGOs.

With respect to the presidential and legislative elections scheduled for June 2015, the African Union (AU), the EU, the East African Community (EAC) and the UN have already announced their intention to deploy election monitoring missions. It is generally expected that President Pierre Nkurunziza will stand for a third term, which would, however, be incompatible with the constitution as he has already served two consecutive terms in office.

The generally tense political climate in the country is additionally exacerbated by demographic pressure, scarcity of land as well as a stagnating economy.

On 13 February, the UNSC extended the mandate of the UN Office in Burundi (BNUB) until 31 December. On the initiative of Burundi, the mandate was not extended beyond the end of the year.

3.2.2.4.2. Democratic Republic of the Congo

President Joseph Kabila and his coalition continue to dominate political developments in the country, with the opposition remaining marginalized due to the ongoing restriction of political freedoms on the one hand and internal conflict on the other.

The situation in the East of the country, especially in the East Kivu Province, remained volatile and there were repeated heavy clashes between security forces and various rebel groups (inter alia M23, FDLR, ADF). Although the
UN peacekeeping mission (Stabilisation Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo – MONUSCO) increased its presence, it was not successful in establishing lasting peace. Human rights violations committed by all parties to the conflict, the ongoing operations of armed rebel groups in the eastern part of the country, frequent devastating attacks on the local civil population, the use of child soldiers, cases of gender-specific violence, weak government structures as well as slow progress in implementing urgently required political reforms continue to pose a threat to stability in large parts of the country and particularly in the eastern Kivu provinces.

Preparations for the local elections 2015 as well as the presidential elections 2016, in which President Laurent Kabila is expected to stand again (thus violating the currently applicable constitution), are already underway.

On 28 March, the UNSC extended the mandate of MONUSCO and its intervention brigade to neutralise armed groups until 31 March 2015. On 30 January, the sanctions regime was unanimously extended until the beginning of February 2015. The UNSC moreover dealt in an ongoing manner with the threat posed by armed groups in the country and announced that military action would be taken against the Forces Démocratiques de Libération du Rwanda (FDLR) rebel group, if the later did not voluntarily hand in its weapons.

3.2.2.4.3. Rwanda

In Rwanda, the year was dominated by the commemoration of the 20th anniversary of the genocide committed by Hutu against Tutsi. On the occasion of the anniversary of the outbreak of the genocide, a major commemorative event was held in Kigali in April in which inter alia UNSG Ban Ki-moon participated and recognised the international community’s co-responsibility and/or its inactivity in connection with the genocide.

Nevertheless, it became evident that also in the context of the subsequent hundred-day commemoration period only limited open discussion on the events of 1994 seemed possible. While Tutsi (approximately 15% of the population), most of them confidents of President Paul Kagame from the time of his exile in Uganda, continue to hold key positions in politics, the military and the security forces, Hutu are still denied access to important public sector positions. At the same time the use of the French language, which is largely spoken by the Hutu, is massively restricted in favour of the English language.

The opposition “Green Party” has filed a lawsuit with the Supreme Court against the marginalisation of French, which is enshrined as the third official language in the constitution. The registration of the “Green Party” as a party can be interpreted as a positive sign – at the same time, however, some other political groups were denied registration as parties.
3.2.2.4.4. Uganda

President Museveni and his governing party, the National Resistance Movement (NRM), were able to further strengthen their power in the country. The President was, however, accused of developing increasingly autocratic tendencies. In September, for instance, he removed the Prime Minister who allegedly had ambitions to stand in the 2016 presidential elections. Corruption remained a significant problem and is the central issue discussed in the dialogue with the international donors’ community. At domestic policy level, the decision to further tighten anti-homosexual legislation was highly charged from a human rights’ perspective as it provided for maximum prison sentences for homosexuality and activities that support it. In August, however, the constitutional court repealed the law for formal reasons but it has since been again discussed.

The ongoing insecurity in the East of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the fighting in South Sudan between government and opposition translated into a further increase in the influx of refugees to Uganda. The main focus of Uganda’s foreign policy is on its neighbouring countries and involvement in regional organisations, especially the East African Community (EAC) and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), as well as in the context of the International Conference of the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR). Underlining the important role it plays in the region, Uganda contributed a troop contingent of some 7,000 personnel to the AU mission in Somalia and following the outbreak of the conflict in South Sudan, Uganda also sent soldiers – who are, however, not covered by an international mandate – to stabilise the situation in South Sudan. Since 16 September, the Ugandan Foreign Minister has been the President of the UNGA.

3.2.2.5. West Africa

3.2.2.5.1. Burkina Faso

At the beginning of the year, the planned amendment to the constitution which would have enabled the incumbent President Blaise Compaoré, in power for 27 years, to add another term in office from 2015 onwards, led to the split in the governing party and triggered nationwide protests. On 30 October – the day scheduled for the vote in Parliament – the protests culminated in a popular uprising which was also joined by the military. On 31 October, President Compaoré declared his resignation and fled abroad.

As opposition, civil society and the army had been able to agree within the two-week deadline set by the AU on a transition charter on 16 November, former short-term foreign minister and diplomat Michel Kafando was officially sworn in as interim president on 21 November. On 19 November, the latter designated ruler Lieutenant Colonel Yacouba Isaac Zida, installed in the meantime by the army, as Prime Minister. On the evening of 23 Novem-
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ber, the interim government was presented to the public; regular elections are scheduled for October 2015.

3.2.2.5.2. Cabo Verde

The Special Partnership agreed between the EU and Cabo Verde in 2007 was further implemented, the area of security and stability was upgraded and the political dialogue further continued in the context of the visit paid by the EU Commissioner for Development Andris Piebalgs to Praia. The political objectives pursued under the mobility partnership EU – Cabo Verde were implemented in practice by the entry into force of the visa facilitation and readmission agreement on 1 December. Cabo Verde continued its efforts towards attracting investment, promoting growth, cutting government spending and reducing poverty also following a government reshuffle.

3.2.2.5.3. Côte d’Ivoire

Despite economic success achieved by the government of President Ouattara, progress in raising security levels in the country and bringing about reconciliation with the followers of former President Gbagbo (who is currently being tried before the International Criminal Court in The Hague, while criminal proceedings have been instigated against his wife Simone in Côte d’Ivoire) has been rather lacklustre. The social atmosphere is tense and the security situation is not satisfactory. Concessions were, however, made to the opposition and thus the party of Gbagbo (inter alia in redesigning the Independent Electoral Commission, which is to prepare and monitor the presidential elections 2015).

By adopting resolution 2153 (2014), the UNSC lifted some of the sanctions imposed on the country and extended the mandate of the remaining elements until 30 April 2015. Additionally, resolution 2162 (2014) reduced the troop strength of the UN Operation in Côte d’Ivoire (UNOCI) and extended the mandate until 30 June 2015.

3.2.2.5.4. Ghana

High debt burden, increasing inflation rates and a depreciating currency forced the government led by President John Dramani Mahama to turn to the IMF for support. Government efforts aimed at fighting debt have also substantially slowed the pace of Austrian economic projects.

3.2.2.5.5. Guinea-Bissau

The parliamentary and presidential elections, held successfully on 13 April and 18 May in a peaceful atmosphere, put an end to the interim period, the country has been through since the military coup of April 2012 and the related international isolation of Guinea-Bissau. The former unity party
Partido Africano da Independência da Guiné e Cabo Verde (PAIGC), which had been in government until April 2012, won the absolute majority of the 102 seats in parliament and its former Finance Minister José Mário Vaz was elected President on 18 May. Furthermore, the still influential mastermind behind the coup of April 2012, Chief of Staff General Antonio Indjai, was removed from office in September. As a result of political normalisation, the EU, after having lifted the provisional sanctions, also examines lifting all sanctions imposed at the time based on Art. 96 of the Cotonou Agreement.

In May and November, the UNSC extended the mandate of the UN Integrated Peace-Building Office in Guinea-Bissau (UNIOGBIS), for the time being until 28 February 2015.

3.2.2.5.6. Liberia
Since the beginning of the year, the Ebola epidemic ravaging in Liberia – and in its neighbouring countries Guinea and Sierra Leone – claimed more than 3,400 lives with a total of more than 8,000 cases of infection by the end of the year. The epidemic also left a serious impact on the healthcare sector in general, on the food supply and on economic life. Thanks to enhanced international relief and support measures, the number of new infections declined from mid-November onwards. The postponement of the elections to a part of the senate until further notice, as intended by the President by way of emergency legislation, was rejected by parliament and 20 December was defined as election day. As expected, voter turnout was low, standing at around 25 %.

By adopting resolution 2176 (2014) and resolution 2190 (2014), the UNSC extended the mandate of the UN Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) until 30 September 2015. In view of the Ebola epidemic, the reduction of force levels was, however, suspended for the time being. Resolution 2188 (2014) extended the 1521 sanctions regime.

3.2.2.5.7. Mali
In April, Moussa Mara was appointed new Prime Minister by President Ibrahim Boubacar Keïta. The local elections planned for October, were postponed until 2015 without a concrete date being given, and will be held together with the regional elections.

The security situation in the North remains explosive with repeated attacks and violent clashes between terrorists and intervention troops.

No progress was achieved with respect to the reconciliation between the government and the insurgent Tuareg groups in the North, in particular MNLA (Mouvement National pour la Libération de l’Azawad), HCUA (Haut Conseil pour l’unité de l’Azawad) and MAA (Mouvement arabe de l’Azawad). Fighting erupted between the army and armed groups when Prime Minister Mara visited the Tuareg stronghold Kidal on 17 May. Only following mediation by
the Mauritanian President Aziz and the UN Special Representative Koenders were the conflicting parties able to agree on a ceasefire on 23 May. Mediated by Algeria, the first round of inner-Mali dialogue started in Algiers on 16 July. In the context of these talks, a roadmap laying out the further course of negotiations was signed. Notwithstanding these developments, mutual distrust is still huge among the various parties. After several rounds of negotiations were held, talks are to be continued in 2015.

The EU is active in Mali via a military advice and training operation (EU Training Mission, EUTM Mali) to which Austria contributes eight persons.

By adopting resolution 2164 (2014) on 25 June, the UNSC decided to extend the mandate of the Multidimensional Integrated Stabilisation Mission in Mali (MINUSMA). In the light of the still instable situation on the ground and the fatal attacks on MINUSMA members, the UNSC dealt repeatedly with Mali. By 31 October, 73 % of the mission’s target strength was achieved and it was thus able to increase the presence in the North and the more rural areas. On 12 December, the Tunisian Foreign Minister Mongi Hamdi was appointed new Special Representative of the UNSG and Head of MINUSMA. On 14 December, MINUSMA Force Commander Kazura terminated his mandate.

3.2.2.5.8. Nigeria

Boko Haram and other Salafist terrorist organisations stepped-up their activities by also launching bomb attacks in the capital Abuja. In the three northeastern provinces under state of emergency, whole areas were conquered and a Caliphate proclaimed. The international outcry following the kidnapping, forced conversion to Islam and forced marriage of more than 200 female students and the increasing flows of refugees as well as attacks launched by Boko Haram in the neighbouring countries led to three international conferences (Paris, London, Abuja) aimed at improving regional cooperation in fighting terrorism.

Political life was dominated by the preparations for the presidential and governor elections scheduled for February 2015. The governing party nominated President Goodluck Jonathan, a Christian from the South of the country for re-election, while the opposition party, which is almost as large as a result of split offs from the governing party, nominated former President Muhammadu Buhari and thus a Muslim candidate from the North. This is a clear contradiction to the oral agreement of an alternating presidency between the South and the North and holds the corresponding potential for conflict.

The lack of energy supply, the generally concerning security situation and falling oil prices, which further dampened the economic and investment climate, although Nigeria – following the recalculation of its gross national product – is now considered the largest national economy in Africa, counted among the most important challenges. Trade from Austria to Nigeria has, however, registered good growth rates over the last few years.
3.2.2.5.9. Senegal

In February, President Macky Sall presented the “Plan Sénégal Emergent” (PSE) aimed at improving the country’s economic and social situation in the long term, to the international donors’ community in Paris. Apart from further measures in the education and social areas, increases in productivity levels in certain sectors, the industrialisation and the creation of growth centres in the country are to boost structural change, in which context public private partnerships are to play an important role. By 2035 Senegal strives to reach emerging country status.

The country has already succeeded in securing substantial financing pledges from donors for large investment projects. Yet, Senegal still struggles with problems in the field of electricity generation and food supply.

The local elections held in June, which took place after the entry into force of a decentralisation reform, produced generally positive results for the broad governing coalition. Subsequent to these elections, President Macky Sall held a government reshuffle in July and appointed his adviser and previous coordinator for the PSE, Mohamed Dionné, as new Prime Minister and thus successor to Aminata Touré (who had taken office in September 2013). The number of members of government rose from 32 to 39.

At international and regional level, President Sall was able to further strengthen his role. Thus he was, for instance, appointed President of the ECOWAS Contact Group for the transition in Burkina Faso. At the end of November, Dakar hosted the 15th Summit of La Francophonie, which brought together 35 Heads of State and Government.

The government’s efforts towards resolving the Casamance conflict were continued in 2014 using various channels, inter alia by holding talks with the northern group of the rebel organisation MFDC (Mouvement des forces démocratiques de la Casamance) mediated by the community of Sant’ Egidio in Rome.

3.2.2.5.10. Sierra Leone

Like its neighbouring countries Guinea and Liberia, Sierra Leone was hit by an Ebola epidemic, which had claimed more than 2,500 lives with a total of more than 7,500 people infected by the end of the year. Thanks to enhanced national and international relief and assistance measures, the number of new infections declined towards the end of the year. The epidemic also had serious impacts on health provision, food supply and economic life in general (inter alia dismissal of local staff working with foreign investors). Against this background it is expected that economic growth will further plunge from 11 % (2013) to 4 % (2014) and -2 % in 2015.

The mandate of the UN Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Sierra Leone (UNIPSIL) expired on 31 March.
3.2.2.5.11. Central African Republic

Although the number of international troops (UN, EU, France) had been stepped up in the country and a peace agreement signed between the largest armed groups, there were violent clashes and most serious human rights violations. Due to lack of reform efforts and a corruption scandal, the transition government lost support. At the end of the year, large parts of the population were still in refugee camps and could only be assisted thanks to massive international help and support.

On 10 February, the EU Foreign Ministers Council, based on UNSC resolution 2134 (2014) decided to dispatch the EU military operation “EUFOR RCA”. Comprising 700 personnel, EUFOR RCA is mandated with establishing a secure environment in the capital Bangui. Six Austrian staff officers were seconded to the operation’s headquarters in Larissa (Greece). In December, it was decided to establish a successor mission mandated with training and advising the country’s security forces (EUMAM RCA, EU Military Advisory Mission).

On 10 April, the UNSC adopted the establishment of a Multidimensional Integrated UN Stabilisation Mission (MINUSCA) involving up to 10,000 military and 1,800 police staff, which took over the tasks of the AU-led international support mission (MISCA) on 15 September. At the end of December, 80 % of the target strength had been achieved. By adopting resolution 2181 (2014), the UNSC extended the mandate of the EU operation in the Central African Republic by 15 March 2015. In addition, the sanctions regime was extended on 28 January by travel bans and asset freezes. The Commission of Inquiry mandated with investigating violations of human rights and international humanitarian law, installed by the UNSC in 2013, submitted its report on 19 December.

3.2.2.5.12. Piracy off the Gulf of Guinea

Enhanced regional cooperation between the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) in fighting piracy off the Gulf of Guinea has produced initial success. A worsening of the security situation in the Niger Delta (oil theft, kidnapings) is, however, expected in connection with the Nigerian elections in February 2015.

4.2.2.5.13. Sahel Region

With a view to the implementation of the EU Strategy for Security and Development in the Sahel, a regional action plan was adopted. The goal pursued by this action plan is to tap into the synergies between the various EU activities and those launched by the EU Member States as well as to achieve better coordination with the strategies for the Sahel pursued by other organisations such as the UN and the AU.
The EU’s civil advice and training mission to support the Nigerian authorities’ efforts aimed at strengthening their security capabilities in the region, EUCAP Sahel Niger, was continued and another civil CSDP mission, EUCAP Sahel Mali, was established in May.

**3.2.2.6. Western Sahara**

On 29 April, the mandate of the UN Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO) was extended under UNSC resolution 2152 by another twelve months. Based on this resolution, the number of military observers, which also included several Austrians in 2014, was increased. In the middle of the year, the UNSG appointed Kim Bolduc (Canada) Head of the Mission, which was, however, rejected by Morocco. The efforts of the UNSG’s Special Representative Christopher Ross, to convince Morocco and POLISARIO to engage in negotiations remained unsuccessful and reflected the parties’ polarised positions.

**3.2.3. Regional Integration Issues**

The main target defined by the African Union (AU) for the next few years was shifting the current priorities in the fields of peace and security towards stepping up its activities in other policy areas. The ongoing and new crises in Africa (Mali, Central African Republic, Somalia, South Sudan and Nigeria etc.), however, again required the organisation’s full attention. Apart from dealing with the crises and conflicts, the 22nd Summit in Addis Ababa from 27 to 31 January also focused on agriculture and food security. The 23rd Ordinary Session of the Summit of the AU held in Malabo (Equatorial Guinea) on 26 and 27 June, adopted a plan of action for the “Agenda 2063”, a long-term strategic plan for the development of Africa over the next 50 years. This was the first AU summit attended by Egypt after several years of suspension.

Likewise in June, the AU launched a Five Year Programme (2015–2020) on “Gender, Peace and Security in the African Union”, which provides for developing effective strategies and mechanisms for the improved participation of women in promoting peace and security. The Programme is co-funded by Austrian Development Cooperation (ADC), which provides a considerable contribution amounting to one million euros.

In 2014, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) undertook substantial efforts towards finding solutions to the crises in Somalia and South Sudan where it also provides troops. As a result of intensive mediation efforts undertaken in Addis Ababa and by threatening sanctions on the part of the IGAD partners, it was possible to reach a ceasefire and several agreements on the formation of a unity government and the sharing of power in South Sudan between the parties to the conflict. Until the end of 2015, Austrian Development Cooperation will continue to support the Rapid Response
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Fund of IGAD’s regional Conflict Early Warning and Response Mechanism (CEWARN), established to detect and quickly respond to cross-border conflicts over grazing land and water in the IGAD member states Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, Uganda, Sudan, South Sudan and Eritrea (whose membership is currently suspended).

The commitment of Tanzania and Burundi within the East African Community (EAC) somewhat diminished, which was to some extent attributable to domestic policy reasons and in part to regional issues, such as tensions between Tanzania and Rwanda. In 2015, however, Tanzania plans to host another EAC Summit. The common EAC tourist visa – albeit only valid in Kenya, Uganda and Rwanda – entered into force. From the EU’s point of view, the negotiations with the EAC on the European Partnership Agreement (EPA) – which were concluded following some delays due to differences of opinion within EAC – were of particular interest.

At the summit in Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe took over the presidency of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) on 17 August, while South Africa was elected chair of the SADC Organ for Policy, Defence and Security Cooperation. In the context of this organ, the South African Vice President, Cyril Ramaphosa, conducted a mediation mission in Lesotho following a thwarted military coup in the country. A rather less successful attempt towards mediation was undertaken – also under South African leadership – in Madagascar in November.

In terms of content, the most important result achieved by the SADC Summit in Victoria Falls was a partial re-orientation of the Regional Indicative Strategic Development Plan (RISDP), under which the region’s industrialisation was declared to take centre stage – a goal, the SADC intends to implement together with international partners by 2020.

Although the crisis in Mali and Guinea Bissau continued to dominate the agenda of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the toppling of the government in Burkina Faso meant it was faced with a further challenge. The successful completion of negotiations between the EU and ECOWAS on an Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) based on the Cotonou Agreement, marks a milestone in the relations between the two groups of states. The internal reform process aimed at improving the institutional implementation is, however, making only slow progress.

3.3. America

3.3.1. USA

3.3.1.1. General Developments

The key event at domestic policy level were the mid-term elections on 4 November. Conducting an adept anti-Obama campaign in connection with
a low voter turnout of 36 %, the Republicans succeeded in clearly increasing their majority in the House of Representatives to 247 seats (188 for the Democrats) and in winning the Senate. The new Congress thus consists of 54 (instead of the previous 45) Republican Senators, 44 Democrats and two independent Senators. In the States, the Republicans were also able to win votes and 31 out of 50 Governors are now Republicans. Of the approximately 7,400 seats (Congressmen and Senators) in the regional parliaments, 56 % are held by the Republican Party.

After the mid-term elections, President Obama announced a presidential decree according to which four to five million immigrants who lived illegally in the USA and whose children are US citizens or hold a permanent residence permit, are temporarily protected from deportation. The Republicans accused the President of having exceeded his powers by taking these measures, and brought a lawsuit in a federal court against the government in connection with amendments of parts of the healthcare reform (Obamacare).

As a result of increased oil and natural gas production in the USA due to the exploitation of unconventional resources in shale (fracking), some restrictions imposed on oil exports were relaxed in June. In addition, the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission approved the construction of three further liquefied natural gas export terminals. The decision to build the Keystone XL Pipeline to transport crude oil from Canadian tar sands to the Gulf of Mexico was, however, postponed by President Obama.

The plans for an intelligence services reform, prepared based on proposals by experts and presented by President Obama in his speech on 17 January in response to the revelations of former intelligence staff member Edward Snowden, had not been adopted by Congress by the end of the legislative period. In April, Michael Rogers replaced Keith Alexander as Director of the National Security Agency (NSA).

Following the resignation of the Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric Shinseki on 30 May due to shortcomings in the Veterans Health Administration and its hospitals for former members of the military, and of Secretary of Health and Human Services Kathleen Sebelius on 9 June, President Obama was forced to reshuffle his cabinet. The new Secretaries appointed were Julian Castro, Sylvia Burwell and Robert McDonald. In autumn, Attorney General of the United States, Eric Holder, and Defence Secretary Charles Hagel announced that they wished to resign form their offices.

The crisis unleashed by the Russian occupation of the Crimea and the fighting in eastern Ukraine led to a dramatic deterioration of relations between the USA and Russia. In sync with the EU, numerous sanctions were subsequently imposed. In a speech he gave on 3 September in Tallinn, President Obama stressed that he was willing to defend the territorial integrity of each and every NATO alley.
The mediation efforts by Secretary of State Kerry in the Middle East Peace process remained unsuccessful. The same held true for the E3/EU+3 talks with Iran on the latter’s nuclear programme, which also failed to produce an agreement by the end of the year. The military advances of the terrorist militia ISIL (Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant) in Iraq and in Syria prompted President Obama to dispatch military advisers and special troops and to approve air strikes against ISIL positions. The withdrawal of all US combat troops from Afghanistan was completed according to plan by the end of the year.

In the context of his Asia/Pacific priority, President Obama visited four East and South East Asian states (including Japan) in April, paid a state visit to Beijing in November and participated in multilateral meetings in China, Myanmar and Australia. With respect to the territorial conflicts in the East and South China Sea, President Obama referred to the importance of reaching a diplomatic solution, while the USA at the same time further expanded military cooperation with the allied states in the regions. Although noticeable progress was achieved in the negotiations on the establishment of a Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), which currently encompasses twelve countries, it has not yet been possible to reach a final agreement.

In the middle of December, President Obama announced a change of course in the USA’s hitherto policy towards Cuba, which was to result in a normalisation of bilateral relations. A lifting of the economic sanctions imposed against the island state is, however, subject to approval by Congress.

In the USA, a total of 35 death sentences were executed, of these 10 individuals each were executed in Missouri and in Texas. A total of 72 persons were sentenced to death. This is slightly less than in 2013. The number of states without capital punishment still stands at 18.

3.3.1.2. EU-USA

At the US-EU Summit held in Brussels on 26 March, both parties emphasised the pivotal role played by the Transatlantic Partnership and agreed on close cooperation in connection with the crisis in Ukraine, the negotiations with Iran on the country’s nuclear programme, in fighting terrorism and in the fields of climate change, energy and data security. Two EU-US Energy Council meetings in April and December dealt with the aspects of energy and energy security.

Four further rounds of negotiations, ongoing since July 2013, were held on a Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP), which seeks to stimulate economic growth and create jobs. Talks focused mainly on topics relating to market access, services, investment and regulatory coherence. Due to public scepticism in some EU Member States, including Austria, the European Commission in January suspended negotiations on investment protection and on ISDS (Investor-State Dispute Settlement) under TTIP for the time
being, and launched a public consultation procedure whose results are to be presented in 2015.

Deliberations on a general EU-US data protection framework agreement on police and judicial cooperation, ongoing since 2010, were continued but not concluded.

3.3.1.3. Bilateral Relations between Austria and the USA

Bilateral relations between Austria and the US continued to develop positively. The regular exchange of visits at diplomatic level and the very good level of cooperation in multi-lateral bodies (UN, HRC) is particularly noteworthy. Vienna, as home to many international organisations (especially the UN, OSCE, IAEA), has again proven to be an important hub whose visibility was enhanced in connection with the E3/EU+3 talks with Iran. Austria’s expert knowledge as an active political player and important economic factor and investor in Central Europe as well as in the Balkans is appreciated by the USA.

Regarding the surveillance activities carried out by US intelligence services, dialogue with the USA was continued on various levels and open issues clarified.

There are also wide-ranging opportunities for cooperation in the field of science and innovation. The Austrian Office of Science and Technology (OST) at the Austrian embassy in Washington, for instance, provides services to the “Research and Innovation Network Austria” (RINA), which comprises about 1,000 individuals in North America and together with other Austrian representations promotes cooperation among scientific institutions. The Center for Austrian Culture and Commerce (Center Austria) at the University of New Orleans and the Center for Austrian Studies at the University of Minnesota in Minneapolis/St. Paul continued their successful study and teaching programmes. The Austrian Marshall Plan Foundation deepened its successful cooperation with US partner universities. Nine US-American experts on politics, research and business participated in this year’s George C. Marshall visit on the topic of “Smart Infrastructure”.

In the cultural field, the cultural fora in New York and Washington are well-established centres for the ongoing presentation of contemporary Austrian art and culture. Apart from focusing on cultural and educational policy content, the events that were supported and/or organised by the cultural fora dealt mainly with current topics of social policy and cross-cultural relevance. Both cultural fora also belong to the respective local EUNIC clusters, which regularly present joint Europe-related events.

The development and expansion of positive and future-oriented relations with the Jewish Community is a central concern of the Austrian representations in the USA. Considering the density of organisations, this holds especially true for the Austrian Consulate-General in New York in whose juris-
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diction the headquarters of the World Jewish Congress, the American Jewish Committee (AJC), the Conference of Presidents of Major Jewish American Organizations, the Anti-Defamation League and B’ni B’rith are located. There is also close cooperation with the Holocaust museums especially in Washington and Los Angeles where Austrian Holocaust Memorial Service representatives are active.

The provision of social and legal services to those Austrians who were forced to flee from Nazi persecution to the USA following Austria’s “Anschluss” in 1938 remains an important task for all Austrian representations. The implementation of the comprehensive restitution and reparation measures, which Austria committed itself to under the Washington Agreement in 2001, continues to be closely followed by the US administration. The Austrian efforts towards the restitution of art objects, the provision of nursing services funding for Holocaust survivors in need and Austria’s role in the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) are very much welcomed by the USA.

The dialogue with the “Young Leaders” of the American Jewish Committee (AJC-ACCESS) launched in 2010 was further continued and expanded. In Washington and in New York, the already traditional Hanukkah celebrations were held at the Embassy and the Consulate-general in December.

On the website www.jewishnews.at, the Press and Information Service of the Austrian Embassy in Washington publishes the English online newsletter “Jewish News from Austria” and also makes available English translations of relevant articles published in the Austrian media. The website also includes information on and references to all aspects of Jewish life in Austria as well as on activities and institutions in connection with addressing and coming to terms with the Holocaust, Holocaust memorial services and current restitution issues.

More in-depth information on and about Austria and relations with the USA is provided in the publication “Austrian Information”, published since 1948 by the press and information service. The newly designed print edition has a circulation of currently 10,000 issues, is published three times a year and is also available online at www.austrianinformation.org. In addition, an electronic newsletter (“Austrian Dispatch”) providing the latest news and constantly updated information on the representation authorities’ activities is sent out once a month per email.

Alongside the publications currently available, the press and information service expanded its portfolio in the field of new media (Facebook, Twitter, Flickr, Pinterest, medium.com). Besides its own website, the Embassy also maintains the website “Taste of Austria” (Austrian cuisine, sustainable farming, “coffee house culture”, etc.)

An American-Austrian exchange of journalists, initiated in 2007 by the International Center for Journalists and the Austrian Board for Journalist Education, was organised for the eighth time.
3.3.2. Canada

3.3.2.1. General Developments

The conservative government, which holds an absolute majority and is led by Prime Minister Stephen Harper, maintained its focus on strengthening the economy in order to be able to present a balanced budget in the election year 2015. Although the low oil prices required a revision of the forecasts in the booming regions of the West, Canada was able to compensate for that by launching a positive impetus in the processing industry. At foreign policy level, Canada continued its policy of intensifying economic relations, mainly through negotiating free trade agreements.

Canada sees itself as supporter of liberal democracies. As a close ally of Israel it is active in fighting ISIL, and also supports Ukraine. At UN level, it is particularly committed to global action aimed at promoting maternal and children’s health at global level and fighting early and forced marriage.

3.3.2.2. EU-Canada

Canada and the EU cooperate as likeminded partners on a wide range of levels; in regular meetings, a comprehensive catalogue of topics is dealt with. The completion of the long-standing negotiations with the European Commission on a Strategic Partnership Agreement (SPA) as well as on a Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA) topped the agenda of the EU-Canada Summit in Ottawa in September. CETA is the most ambitious free trade agreement signed by the EU so far: according to the European Commission it provides for the abolition of 99.2 % of EU customs duties on Canadian imports, of 98.8 % of Canadian customs duties on EU imports and for clearly improved market access. At political level, deepened cooperation was agreed on in efforts aimed at countering current crises and in the energy, environmental and climate fields.

3.3.2.3. Bilateral Relations between Austria and Canada

Austria and Canada maintain particularly intense relations in the fields of business and culture. Canada is Austria’s fourth-largest export market overseas and the positive trend is continuing. Some 80 Austrian companies have subsidiaries in Canada, the main group of export goods are machinery and appliances. Austria enjoys a very positive image as a cultural nation and is held in particularly high regard in the field of classical music. Some 5,500 holders of Austrian passports and about 40,000 individuals who consider themselves to be “Austrians at heart” contribute to the positive image enjoyed by Austria in Canada.
3.3.3. Latin America and the Caribbean

3.3.3.1. General Developments

The Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) held its summit on 28 and 29 January in Habana. At this meeting, Cuba handed over the community’s annually rotating pro tempore presidency to Costa Rica. CELAC’s main tasks are the promotion of political, economic, social and cultural integration of the states of Latin America and the Caribbean.

The CELAC region is an important economic partner for the EU. It boasts high growth rates both in bi-regional trade and in exports. The EU is the largest investor in Latin America and the Caribbean. While the region has demonstrated a remarkable resilience in the global economic and financial crisis of the last few years, it was the emerging region that registered the lowest economic growth rates in 2014, ranging at an average of 1.1 %. Falling raw material prices are one of the reasons for this deceleration of economic growth, by which Bolivia, Paraguay, Uruguay and most of all Colombia were least heavily hit.

After having been postponed several times, the 46th Summit of the Market of the South (MERCOSUR) was held in Caracas on 29 July, where the semi-annually rotating chair passed from Venezuela to Argentina. At the 47th MERCOSUR Summit in Paraná, Brazil took over from Argentina.

In June, Mexico took over the pro tempore presidency of the Pacific Alliance set up in 2011. The organisation’s foremost goal is the establishment of a free trade area including a customs union, freedom to travel and visa-free travel between its members (Chile, Peru, Colombia and Mexico). In October, Austria submitted its application for being granted observer status in the Alliance.

3.3.3.2. EU-LAC

Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) are classified as a partner region that is important and close to the EU. The EU-LAC process that has been institutionalised since 1999, is an important engine for bi-regional relations between the EU and Latin America as well as the Caribbean. Since its inception in December 2011, CELAC has been the EU’s contact partner in this bi-regional process. Summit meetings at the Heads of State and Government level take place every two years. The 1st EU-CELAC Summit (and the 7th EU-LAC Summit) took place in Santiago de Chile on 26 and 27 January. The summits defined the strategic focus for the further development of relations to a region with which there is a high level of convergence on key global issues (such as human rights, disarmament, etc.). By the time the next summit is held on 10 and 11 June 2015 in Brussels, the current Action Plan is to be updated and three further chapters (citizens’ security, higher education and food security) are to be added.
The EU-LAC Foundation, which was established in 2011, has already successfully taken up its comprehensive activities. The foundation’s main task is to foster institutional cooperation between the EU and the Latin American and Caribbean region. More specifically, it is to serve as a permanent contact between EU-CELAC summit meetings. Furthermore, it is planned to turn the EU-LAC Foundation into an international organisation based on an international agreement. The relevant negotiations have been continued.

The EU continues to adhere to the concept of a sub-regional approach based on association or economic partnership agreements in order to promote regional integration of the LAC partners and to improve the legal framework conditions for trade relations and investments. The EU’s central policy focus in this context is on contributing towards strengthening stability, prosperity and social cohesion in Latin America and the Caribbean, establishing a common area of higher education and fighting drugs and organised crime. The EU maintains a dense network of contractual relations with the LAC region: association agreements with Mexico (2000) and Chile (2002) as well as Strategic Partnerships and Action Plans with Brazil (2007) and Mexico (2008). The implementation of the EU Free Trade Agreements with Colombia and Peru, as well as the Association Agreements with six Central American countries (Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua and Panama) continued to play a key role.

Furthermore, the EU opened negotiations with Cuba on a bilateral agreement on political dialogue and cooperation. Based on the negotiation directives adopted at the Foreign Relations Council in February, two rounds of negotiations have been held so far, one in April and one in August.

Since the Fourth EU-LAC Summit was held in Vienna in 2006, bilateral relations between Austria and the region have witnessed ongoing positive development. The number of high-level visits has constantly increased: Federal Minister Wolfgang Brandstetter and a delegation of the Federal Council paid a visit to Brazil, a large business mission led by the President of the Austrian Economic Chamber Christoph Leitl visited Mexico, and Province Governor Günther Platter visited Peru. Austria maintains good and friendly relations with the countries in the region. Austrian business continues to benefit from interesting investment and export opportunities. Another hallmark of relations is good cooperation in the science and research sectors.

3.3.3.3. Developments in the Individual Countries

3.3.3.3.1. Argentina

Due to lack of agreement with the “Holdouts” and following the expiry of the period of grace for servicing the debts due for the bonds restructured in 2005 and 2010, international rating agencies downgraded Argentina’s creditworthiness on 30 July to selective default. Prior to that, Argentina had taken several steps to re-approach international financial markets. Apart from
agreement reached with the Paris Club on repaying open debt, it conceded in several cases before the World Bank’s International Centre for the Settlement of Investment Disputes (ICSID) and agreed on compensation payments with the Madrid-based oil group Repsol.

3.3.3.3.2. Belize

In the border conflict between Belize and Guatemala, the mixed commission was reactivated at the beginning of the year following mediation by the Organisation of American States (OAS). In the context of the commission, an Action Plan 2014 and a roadmap were agreed upon. Both provide inter alia for an expansion of bilateral cooperation in the field of tourism and between companies, trade facilitation and mutual recognition of diplomas. Provided that such confidence-building measures prove successful in the long term, a referendum on settling the long-standing territorial dispute between the two countries could be held in 2015.

3.3.3.3.3. Bolivia

In the presidential elections in October, President Evo Morales was re-elected for a third term. At the Senate and Congress elections held at the same time, the governing party was able to win the vast majority of votes. The topic dominating both the domestic and the foreign policy agenda was the lawsuit filed in April against Chile before the International Court of Justice (ICC) on separate access to the sea. In June, Bolivia hosted the G-77 plus China Summit in Santa Cruz.

3.3.3.3.4. Brazil

The priorities defined by the government of President Dilma Rousseff, who was re-elected for another four year period on 26 October, remain fighting poverty, a better distributive justice and the country’s technical modernisation, inter alia with an ambitious foreign scholarship programme. The Football World Championship that had brought a number of Heads of State to Brazil, was also used for bilateral contacts. At a BRICS summit (Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa) held in Fortaleza in mid-July, participants decided to set up a BRICS Development Bank and a currency reserve fund. Further important meetings on the margins of the World Championship included a UNASUR Summit and a China-CELAC Summit. With a view to strengthening its international role, Brazil still seeks to get a permanent seat on the UNSC. Most recently relevant steps were taken in the context of the G4 (together with Germany, Japan and India).

3.3.3.3.5. Chile

With the centre-left party alliance “Nueva Mayoría“, the Socialist Michelle Bachelet stood for a second term as President of Chile. Having won the elec-
tions on 11 March, she started to implement far-reaching reforms with a special focus on tax, educational and constitutional reform. On 1 April, Chile was shaken by a serious earthquake in Iquique, followed by a devastating fire in Valparaíso on 12 April. The number of bomb attacks allegedly launched by leftist anarchist groups increased and claimed the first life since the country’s return to democracy. Chile is currently a non-permanent member of the UNSC (2014/2015) and held a seat on the Human Rights Council (2011–2014).

On the border conflict with Bolivia see Chapter 3.3.3.3., on the border conflict with Peru see Chapter 3.3.3.14.

3.3.3.3.6. Costa Rica
The border conflict between Costa Rica and Nicaragua concerning the Rio San Juan region continued to overshadow bilateral relations. Currently, three border conflicts are pending with the International Court of Justice (ICJ). In February, Costa Rica brought another case for the delimitation of maritime borders in the Caribbean Sea and the Pacific Ocean against Nicaragua before the ICJ, a sentence is however not expected before 2017.

On 8 May, Luis Guillermo Solís Rivera officially took office as new President; all open border issues with Nicaragua are still to be settled exclusively via the courts.

In 2014, Costa Rica held the pro tempore CELAC presidency.

3.3.3.3.7. Guatemala
On the border conflict with Belize see Chapter 3.3.3.2.

3.3.3.3.8. Haiti
As it had not been possible to hold the elections as planned, the domestic policy situation remained very tense. By extending the mandates of some MPs for the time being, it was possible to ensure Parliament’s legal capacity. In the context of its semi-annual debates, the UN Security Council adopted resolution 2180 (2014) extending the UN Stabilisation Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) and also providing for a reduction of its military strength.

3.3.3.3.9. Colombia
In the parliamentary elections in March, the governing party succeeded in retaining its absolute majority. In June, President Juan Manuel Santos was re-elected in the second ballot for a second term. Following the completion of further negotiation chapters, the peace negotiations with the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (FARC) entered into a decisive phase. Exploratory talks on commencing peace negotiations were held with the sec-
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Columbia succeeded in further consolidating its economy and counts among the countries that register the strongest growth rates in the region.

3.3.3.3.10. Cuba
The implementation of economic reform and the attraction of foreign investors remained behind the expectations of the government led by Raúl Castro. The Cuban government, however, expects that the historic decision on resuming diplomatic relations with the USA, taken on 17 December, will also lead the country out of economic stagnation. Cuba successfully continued its policy of regional integration and won international recognition for its committed efforts during the Ebola crisis.

3.3.3.3.11. Mexico
In the middle of August, 21 implementing acts aimed at putting the ambitious energy reform into practice were adopted. Based on these acts, private and also foreign participation in the previously strictly regulated Mexican energy sector is permitted. The goal is to strengthen both the country’s energy production and its economic development while at the same time achieving a lowering of energy prices.

The assassination of six persons and the disappearance of 43 students from a teacher college in the Mexican State of Guerrero made the country the focus of international attention. Suspected cooperation between local politicians and police forces with organised crime was the topic of major demonstrations. Such incidents highlight the consistently fragile nature of the rule of law and the weakness of Mexican institutions, especially in the states that are affected by organised crime and drug cartels. The DNA samples of the mortal remains that might belong to the missing students are being analysed at the Institute of Legal Medicine at the Medical University of Innsbruck. Furthermore, an extrajudicial execution of up to 22 unarmed persons by an army unit is suspected to have taken place in Tlatlaya on 30 June. The case is currently the subject of court proceedings.

3.3.3.3.12. Nicaragua
At the end of the year, construction works on the approximately 278 km long Inter-Oceanic Canal, the currently largest construction project in Latin America, started in Nicaragua. With an estimated construction period of five years, the new waterway will link the Atlantic with the Pacific Ocean and lead from the estuary of the Rio Punta Gorda at the Caribbean coast to the estuary of the Rio Brito in the East. The construction of the canal is a controversial issue – both from the environmental and the social points of view, and the start of construction works was accompanied by violent protests.

On the border conflict with Costa Rica see Chapter 3.3.3.3.6.
3.3.3.3.13. **Paraguay**

In his first year in office, President Horacio Cartes took a number of steps towards normalising relations with the MERCOSUR neighbours and towards re-integrating the country in the economic bloc. With a strong focus on stimulating the economy, Paraguay strove to increasingly attract foreign investments for major projects. At domestic policy level, the year was dominated by large anti-government demonstrations calling for a change of course in the country's economic policy, curbing corruption, agricultural reform and fighting poverty as well as crime. Following a number of attacks and kidnappings, the guerrilla movement EPP moved increasingly into the limelight.

3.3.3.3.14. **Peru**

At the beginning of the year, the sentence passed by the International Court of Justice (ICJ) terminated the long-standing dispute on the maritime border between Peru and Chile. The regional elections conducted in the middle of October did not bring about any changes in the power structures and were overshadowed by large-scale corruption scandals. By launching infrastructure offensives and measures aimed at stimulating the economy, the government strove to put a halt to the economic downward trend. Hosting the 20th World Climate Conference from 1 to 12 December, Lima was shifted into the focus of international attention.

3.3.3.3.15. **Uruguay**

The run-off ballot in the presidential elections on 30 November was won by Tabaré Vázquez. It is thus the third consecutive time that the office of President has been held by a member of the left alliance Frente Amplio. Vázquez made the continuation of the policy of social inclusion, the fight against violent crime and reform of the public education system priorities of his term in office. Under its migration and refugee policy, Uruguay took in forty Syrian refugees in September and six former Guantanamo prisoners in December. In December, Uruguay took over the pro tempore presidency of the Union of South American Nations (UNASUR) from Surinam.

3.3.3.3.16. **Venezuela**

In the first half of the year, Venezuela was shaken by months of violent protests against the government of President Nicolás Maduro. The rest of 2014 was dominated by the economic crisis, the ongoing political polarisation, the fate of political prisoners and the appointments to important public and government positions.
3.4. Asia

3.4.1. General Developments

In 2014 Asia again saw highly heterogeneous developments. There was renewed tension at old trouble spots in the Middle East and conflicts escalated again, especially in and around the Gaza Strip. The military success of the terrorist organisation ISIL/Da'esh in civil-war-torn Syria and in the North of Iraq as well as the attacks launched by the Taliban in Pakistan saw a hitherto unknown level of violence. After the termination of the NATO Operation and the formation of a unity government, the situation still remained fragile in Afghanistan. Although it was able to keep the simmering conflicts in the Far East, particularly in the Korean peninsula, the East China Sea and the South China Sea under control, they were far from being resolved. In some states, elections led to political changes of sustainable impact, most of all in India.

Overall, Asia experienced relatively sound and generally high-level economic growth; a slight decline in Chinese growth rates was compensated for by a rise in other national economies – especially by India. The process of economic integration in the Far East and in Central Asia continued at subregional, regional and supra-regional level, in which context China was particularly able to attract attention by suggesting far-reaching proposals for intensified interlinking and announcing major infrastructure investment.

3.4.2. EU-Asia

The 10th ASEM Summit (Asia Europe Meeting) marked the highlight of the dialogue between Europe and Asia and was held in Milan on 16 and 17 October. With the accession of Croatia and Kazakhstan at the summit, the dialogue forum between the two continents, which had been founded in 1996, was expanded to include 53 participants. The summit was dedicated to the topic of “Responsible Partnership for Sustainable Growth and Security”. About 40 Heads of State and Government discussed opportunities for better networking and establishing closer links between Europe and Asia, and committed themselves to closer economic cooperation. On the margins of the summit, intensive talks were held on the crisis in Ukraine. Austria was represented by Federal Chancellor Werner Faymann.

The Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF), a foundation set up under private law and mandated with implementing concrete cooperation projects between Europe and Asia, held a meeting of European and Asian museum directors (ASEMUS) at the Weltmuseum in Vienna from 24 to 27 September. The foundation’s 31st and 32nd Board of Governors meeting was held in Riga from 29 to 30 May and in Singapore from 4 to 5 December.
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The EU stepped-up regional cooperation also with respect to ASEAN and continued the implementation of the EU-ASEAN Plan of Action 2013–2017. The motto of the 20th EU-ASEAN Foreign Ministers Meeting held in Brussels on 23 July was “Towards Strategic Partnership for Peace, Stability and Prosperity”. The ministers agreed to upgrade EU-ASEAN relations to a Strategic Partnership. A joint statement adopted by the ministers was published in connection with the downing of a Malaysian Airlines passenger plane on 17 July. Negotiations continued between the EU and individual ASEAN states on Partnership and Cooperation Agreements as well as on Free Trade Agreements. The EU Partnership and Cooperation Agreement with Indonesia entered into force on 1 May and negotiations with Malaysia were continued. The signing of the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement with Thailand was suspended per Council decision of 23 June until a democratically elected government is in place. The investment protection chapter of the free trade agreement with Singapore, the negotiations on which had already been concluded in 2012, was finalised on 17 October; its legal examination by the EU is, however, still pending. The negotiations on a Free Trade Agreement with Vietnam were continued.

Relations with the strategic partners in Asia, China, India, Japan and South Korea were further deepened and numerous meetings held at various levels. Negotiations on a Strategic Partnership Agreement and on a Free Trade Agreement were continued with Japan, on a Free Trade Agreement with India and on an Investment Agreement with China.

3.4.3. Developments in the Regions

3.4.3.1. Near and Middle East

With the aggressive expansion of the terrorist organisation “Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant / ISIL / Da’esh”, the international community’s attention was shifted to its policy of massive and despicable human rights violations that is directed at the declared goal of establishing an Islamic Caliphate in parts of Iraq, in civil-war-torn Syria and beyond. In response, the USA formed an international alliance against ISIL/Da’esh to which Austria also contributes politically by taking measures against Jihadists at national level and by providing humanitarian assistance on the ground. Due to regional political differences, the states of the region refrained from taking a joint approach against this new threat – although it was not long before its destabilising effect on the entire region became all too evident.

The tensions present in the region impacted efforts towards negotiated solutions: the attempt at finding a political solution for Syria (Geneva Process) failed at the beginning of the year and the E3/EU+3-Iran nuclear negotiations, which were largely held in Vienna at the invitation of Austria, had to be extended.
The Israeli-Palestinian conflict saw a new escalation in and around the Gaza Strip, and inconclusive bilateral negotiations were shifted to the level of the UN – also failing, however, to produce any results for the time being.

3.4.3.1.1. Israel / Palestinian Territories, Middle East Peace Process

The generally recognised extraordinary personal commitment of US Secretary of State John Kerry in facilitating direct talks between the Israeli and the Palestinian leadership was not able to overcome the deep divide that exists between the two side’s demands and to avert the talks’ early failure.

Israel’s call for the recognition as “Jewish State” was added to the still open and unresolved “final status issues” (borders and security, future of settlements, status of Jerusalem, refugees’ right of return, use of water resources in the West Bank).

The termination of talks by Israel was, however, triggered by the Palestinian announcement of a “consensus government” supported by Hamas. Israel’s Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu called on Mahmoud Abbas “to decide between peace with Israel and reconciliation with the terrorist organisation Hamas”.

The war in Gaza in the summer claimed more than 2,000 lives, especially on the Palestinian side, and destroyed all prospects for a continuation of the negotiation process in the immediate future.

Although the international community again made generous pledges for the reconstruction of the infrastructure in the Gaza Strip, which had already been destroyed in the wars of 2008 and 2012, the political conditions necessary for a successful reconstruction – the assumption of factual control by the Palestinian “consensus government” as well as the opening of the borders to enable full supply with building materials – could not be met by the end of the year.

Following the most recent futile efforts, a return to bilateral negotiations depends inter alia on the chances of success of the Palestinian efforts with regard to the UNSC. A first attempt aimed at calling for the end of Israeli occupation did not win sufficient support among the Security Council members. Despite US-American announcements that it would at all events block any such initiatives by vetoing them, the Palestinian leadership intends to take further similar approaches.

In its Conclusions of December 2013, the EU Foreign Ministers Council had held out the prospect of an “unprecedented package of European political, economic and security support to both parties” (Special Privileged Partnership) in the event of a peace agreement. This partnership would go beyond existing agreements and facilitate even greater access to European markets and also include measures to facilitate trade and investment as well as closer cooperation at scientific and cultural level. Cooperation at political and security level would likewise be intensified. In this spirit, the newly appointed
EU HR, Federica Mogherini, used her first trip abroad to confirm in direct talks with Israeli and Palestinian decision makers that the Middle East Peace Process was still among the priority items on the EU foreign policy agenda. From 20 to 24 April, Federal Minister Sebastian Kurz paid an official working visit to Israel and the Palestinian Territories during which he met the respective political leadership. Federal Minister Sebastian Kurz also visited the Holocaust memorial Yad Vashem in Israel and met the Chairman of the Central Committee of Jews from Austria in Israel.

3.4.3.1.2. Syria
Throughout the entire year, the parties to the conflict in the Syrian civil war continued to seek a military solution. By the end of the year, more than 200,000 people had lost their lives. With more than 7.6 million internally displaced persons and more than 3 million refugees in the neighbouring countries, more than half of Syria’s population was fleeing from combat and fighting.

The original claim of bringing about democratisation of the political system, as in the other Arab Spring countries, fell victim to the merciless fight for military control over cities and rural areas. The opposition was still unable to agree on common objectives in order to offer people a real alternative to the regime. Human rights observers reported war crimes and crimes against humanity committed by both the regime and armed opposition groups. The military successes of the ISIL/Da’esh terrorist militia confronted the affected segments of the civilian population with an unprecedented and unparalleled level of violence. Reacting to that, an international alliance led by the USA and involving Arab states was formed, which also started to take military action against representatives of the terrorist militia and its infrastructure.

The efforts undertaken by the international community, led by the USA and Russia, towards bringing the parties to the conflict to discuss a political solution at the negotiation table in Geneva had – at the beginning of the year already – resulted in not much more than lip service being paid to the implementation of the Geneva Communiqué of 2012. The Communiqué calls for a political transition based on a government to be appointed jointly by the parties to the civil war; its implementation was, however, thwarted by the regime’s reluctance to relinquish power, while many representatives of the opposition at the same time called for the unconditional and immediate resignation of President Assad. The actual situation was in fact quite to the contrary, as the President was re-elected for another term in office in June. Elections were, however, only held in those parts of the country that were controlled by the regime.

The UNSC adopted resolutions on the humanitarian situation. On the one hand the regular reports submitted by the UNSG exerted political pressure, while the call for humanitarian assistance to be supplied across borders and
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frontlines had on the other hand resulted in tangible improvements, especially in areas that had until then been very difficult to access.

The destruction of the Syrian chemical weapons arsenal demanded by the UNSC has been largely successful.

As an alternative to the – so far thwarted – mediation attempts, the new UN Special Envoy on Syria, Staffan de Mistura, sought to facilitate a political process at national level. The goal pursued under this approach was to convince the immediately affected conflict groups at local level of a cessation of hostilities without attaching further conditions. This was to enable an immediate improvement in the humanitarian situation in the affected area. Subsequently, opportunities for talks on political arrangements in the local context were to be opened up, which – provided they were successful – were to be repeated in other areas and would most ideally have led to the launch of similar processes at national level.

3.4.3.1.3. Iran

During the E3/EU+3-Iran nuclear negotiations held in Vienna at the invitation of Austria, agreement was reached on 24 November on the extension of the measures outlined in the common Action Plan and on the suspension of the restrictive EU measures defined in the common Action Plan until 30 June 2015. The framework agreement should be concluded by the end of March 2015 and based on that a number of technical annexes are to be prepared by the end of June 2015. Alongside the focus on the nuclear issues, the role played by Iran in the region and the still alarming human rights situation in the country remained important issues that were also addressed during the visit Federal Minister Sebastian Kurz paid to Iran from 26 to 28 April.

3.4.3.1.4. Iraq

Against the background of the advances of ISIL/Da'esh and especially since it had conquered Mossul in June, the fight against this terrorist organisation was given top priority in Iraq. The conquest of numerous regions in the North by ISIL/Da'esh led to tensions between the religious groups of Shiites and Sunnis and to massive expulsions of almost the entire non-Sunni population including Christians, Yazidis and other minorities.

In addition, the humanitarian situation became increasingly dire as 5 million people required help and two million had been internally displaced, of which almost one million had fled into the autonomous region Kurdistan-Iraq.

Following the parliamentary elections of 30 April, the new government led by Prime Minister Haidar al-Abadi was sworn in on 9 September. The government seeks to implement an inclusive approach involving all groups of the population and all religious groups.
3.4.3.2. Arabian Peninsula

The political transition process in Yemen was faced with numerous challenges and marked by delays.

3.4.3.3. Central Asia

3.4.3.3.1. Kazakhstan

Several government reshuffles led to the pooling of responsibilities and/or a reduction in the number of ministries and committees.

On 29 May, the treaty on the Eurasian Economic Union was signed with the Russian Federation and Belarus in Astana. In the context of this treaty, which will enter into force on 1 January 2015, Kazakhstan focuses particularly on the economic character of the Union.

Relations between Kazakhstan and the EU are based on the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA) that was signed in 1995, entered into force in 1999 and expired in 2009. The enhanced PCA, negotiated in 2014, is the only one of its kind in Central Asia and is to be signed in 2015.

As demanded by the Kazakh government, the OSCE Mission in Astana was turned into a project coordination office at the end of the year. The EU, the USA and others were critical of this demand as it restricts the Mission’s freedom in reporting on political developments.

3.4.3.3.2. Kyrgyzstan

The withdrawal of the Ata-Meken party from the governing coalition on 18 March led to the resignation of the government led by Prime Minister Zhantoro Satylbadiyev and the formation of a new government under Djoomart Otorbayev.

Regarding the controversy surrounding the goldmine Kumtor, which generates a substantial share of the Kyrgyz economic output, an agreement was concluded after a lengthy conflict between Bishkek and the Canadian mine operator on 24 February.

Following the ethnic clashes of 2010, the situation in South Kyrgyzstan has calmed down but is nevertheless still very tense with frequent incidences in the contested Fergana valley.

In the field of human rights, Kyrgyzstan followed the Russian example and made it difficult for NGOs to access international funding. In June, the US base Manas was closed, thus only Russia maintains military bases in Kyrgyzstan.

Relations between the EU and Kyrgyzstan are based on the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement signed in 1995, which entered into effect on 1 July 1999.
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Kyrgyzstan plans to join the Eurasian Economic Union in 2015; the respective treaties were signed in December 2014.

3.4.3.3.3. Tajikistan

Tajikistan has huge water reserves but due to lack of investment only a small part is currently used. The completion of the 3,600 megawatt hydro power plant in Rogun, the construction of which started back in Soviet Union times, thus enjoys utmost priority for Tajikistan. The project is, however, met with fierce resistance on the part of most of the other Central Asian states, which fear negative impacts on their water-intensive agriculture and/or a general risk potential.

In May, there were again clashes in the Autonomous Region Gorno-Badakhshan.

Relations with the EU are governed by a Partnership and Cooperation Agreement that entered into force on 1 January 2010.

3.4.3.3.4. Turkmenistan

According to estimates, Turkmenistan has the third-largest natural gas resources in the world. In the course of the year, a strong increase in the supplies to China was observed. Turkmenistan also held several talks with the European Commission on the Trans-Caspian Pipeline, as Turkmenistan seeks to diversify its customer structure.

Relations with the EU are based on an Interim Agreement on Trade, concluded in 1998; a Partnership and Cooperation Agreement has not yet been ratified by the EU Member States and the EP.

In February, Foreign Minister Rashid Meredov paid a visit to Austria.

3.4.3.3.5. Uzbekistan

Relations between the EU and Uzbekistan are based on the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement that was signed in 1996 and entered into force in 1999.

In the Ukraine crisis, Uzbekistan was especially cautious and on 27 March abstained from voting in the UNGA on Russia violating international law by annexing the Crimea. Uzbekistan was also affected by the crisis in Ukraine and the subsequent devaluation of the Russian rouble as money transfers from Uzbek citizens who work in Russia declined noticeably. Uzbek automotive exports to Russia also registered a massive drop.

The surveys funded by the World Bank on the planned mega hydro power plant in Rogun on the Vakhsh River, which is fiercely contested by Uzbekistan, were published in summer. These surveys conclude that the project is
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feasible both from the environmental and the economic point of view. Currently, however, funding for the project does not yet appear to be guaranteed.

The parliamentary elections of 21 December were won by the Liberal Democratic Party (52 seats), followed by the National Revival Democratic Party (36), the People’s Democratic Party (27) and the Social Democratic Party (20). The OSCE, represented by a long-term mission, stated that the elections had been well administered although a genuine political alternative had been lacking. The four participating parties, which all support the government and are also supported by it, were more complementary than competitive. Furthermore, the OSCE pointed out that it was necessary to create an atmosphere which guarantees and fosters freedom of assembly and speech, as only then would the necessary criteria and standards for genuine democratic elections be fulfilled.

Human rights organisations deplore the ongoing deterioration of the human rights situation in Uzbekistan. Priority is given to national security as Uzbekistan fears infiltration by radical tendencies, especially from Afghanistan.

In November, a business mission organised by the Austrian Economic Chamber and involving 14 Austrian companies travelled to Tashkent.

3.4.3.4. North East Asia

3.4.3.4.1. People’s Republic of China

China continues to strive to combine a foreign policy approach that is based on economic power, power and/or “real politics” on the one hand with “soft power” elements on the other. The main principles thus observed are the re-establishment and/or preservation of national unity, safeguarding the process of Chinese modernisation at an external level and the principle of non-interference in internal affairs. China hosted the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) summit in Beijing in November and used this opportunity to document its global political and economic leadership claim. At the same time, China likes to stress its role as a developing country that has lifted millions of people out of poverty. China propagates the development of the Silk Road Economic Belt, which aims to create a strategic infrastructure and trading route from China – via Central Asia and by sea – to Europe. On the initiative of China a new Asian Infrastructure and Investment Bank was established. Beijing’s strongly asserted ownership claims to large parts of the South China Sea and its territories (the “Nine-Dash Line”) have put a strain on relations with the other coastal states.

The Fourth Plenary Session of the 18th Central Committee of the Communist Party of China, held from 20 to 23 October, was especially dedicated to the role of the rule of law and the objective of developing “a socialist rule of law with Chinese characteristics”. Commitment to the strict fight against corruption was reiterated and a number of measures providing for the improvement
of court proceedings as well as the promotion of the role of the constitution were adopted.

The discussion on electoral reform was accompanied by numerous demonstrations in Hong Kong from September onwards.

In October, Federal Minister Sebastian Kurz paid a visit to China, where he held talks inter alia with his counterpart Wang Yi.

3.4.3.4.2. Japan

With 617 consecutive days in office, the longest-ever cabinet period without changes since the end of the Second World War came to an end on 3 September. Prime Minister Shinzo Abe replaced two thirds of government members. Only six weeks later, however, two of the newly appointed members of government resigned. When on top of that surprisingly poor economic results for the 3rd quarter were published, Prime Minister Abe dissolved parliament and announced that elections to the Lower House (House of Representatives) would be held on 14 December. At the same time he announced that the second phase of the value added tax increase, initially planned for October 2015 and highly unpopular with the Japanese, was to be postponed. Irrespective of a turnout of only 52 %, the election result confirmed the supremacy of the governing coalition and the opposition’s weakness: the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) led by Abe won 291 seats and 35 seats went to his coalition partner Komeito, compared with only 73 seats for the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ). Consequently, the governing coalition was able to maintain its two-thirds majority in the Lower House.

Based on these results, Prime Minister Abe is now able to continue his “Abe-nomics” course at economic level and also tackle sensitive topics, such as a constitutional amendment in the security policy field or putting some of the nuclear power plants, which were closed down in 2011, back into operation.

The principles of Japanese foreign policy were confirmed: 1) the alliance Japan-USA, 2) deepened cooperation with the neighbouring countries China, South Korea, Russia and the regional organisation ASEAN and 3) the priority of economic diplomacy as one of the supporting pillars of the Japanese economy (negotiation of free trade agreements, investments in Africa, etc.).

3.4.3.4.3. Republic of Korea

In her second year in office, the first female Head of State of the Republic of Korea, Park Geun-hye, faced a number of challenges. The tragic accident involving the ferry boat “Sewol” on 16 April that claimed more than 300 lives greatly affected both her and her governing party Saenuri and resulted in a comprehensive government and cabinet reshuffle. Coming to terms with
As addressing the ferry accident both at political and legal level were therefore the priority issues on the new government’s agenda.

For the remaining term, the President focuses on stimulating the economy and is committed to the general initiative aimed at promoting peace through enhancing cooperation in the region and preparing the ground for a potential peaceful reunification of the Korean peninsula.

The alliance with the USA continues to play a central role in the country’s foreign policy concept. Relations with China, which had been overshadowed by China’s establishment of an Air Defence Zone that overlapped with the Korean zone, have improved as a consequence of several summit meetings. Tensions with Japan that are attributable to regional and historic issues, however, still exist.

3.4.3.4.4. Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK)

Foreign policy relations remained tense as a result of the international community’s ongoing concerns over North Korea’s nuclear and missile programmes and due to the sanctions imposed by the UN, the EU and the USA. Inner-Korean relations continued to be characterised by alternating approximation and provocation.

The report by the UN Commission of Inquiry on Human Rights in North Korea presented in February added to the country’s difficulties. On 18 November, the Third Committee of the UNGA adopted the country resolution on the human rights situation in North Korea that had been jointly introduced by the EU and Japan, thus recognising the findings presented by the Commission of Inquiry, i.e. systematic and serious violations against human rights and referral to the International Criminal Court (ICC).

3.4.3.4.5. Mongolia

Mongolia seeks to maintain good and balanced relations with its two large neighbours China and Russia. In addition, the country is interested in intensifying relations with “third neighbours”, i.e. the USA, Japan and the EU in order to reduce dependency on its direct neighbours.

A government reshuffle was undertaken at the end of the year after parliament had cast a vote of no-confidence against the Head of Government on 5 November. On 21 November, Chimed Saikhanbileg was sworn in as new Prime Minister.

3.4.3.5. South and South East Asia

3.4.3.5.1. ASEAN and ASEAN States

The ten member states (Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam) of the Association of
Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) convened for their two annual summit meetings in the chair country Myanmar (Nay Pyi Taw, 10 and 11 May; 12 and 13 November). Talks were dominated by the further development of the ASEAN community and the relevant implementation of a “master plan”. In this context, participants dealt with topics related to institutional reform and further integration after 2015 (“post-2015”). Active participation in the “ASEAN Business and Investment Council” underlines the business community’s ongoing huge interest in the further development of the ASEAN region. In its capacity as the next ASEAN chair, Malaysia defined the priorities it intends to pursue during its term: finalising the formation of a strong ASEAN community, preparation of a post-2015 ASEAN Agenda, steering ASEAN closer to the people, expanding intra-ASEAN trade and investment, strengthening ASEAN institutional framework, promoting regional peace and security through moderation and strengthening ASEAN’s role as a global player.

### 3.4.3.5.1.1. Brunei

After its successful ASEAN chair in 2013, Brunei continued on its course towards economic diversification and political stability.

The first phase of the gradual introduction of the sharia in criminal law entered into force on 22 April and covers the persecution of general offences and administrative offences. More serious punishments are included in the implementing provisions to the Code of Criminal Procedure, which Brunei intends to put into force in a second phase over the next few years.

### 3.4.3.5.1.2. Indonesia

In Indonesia, domestic policy was dominated by elections. President Joko Widodo, who was elected by a narrow majority in July and sworn in in October, announced an ambitious reform programme. By drastically reducing subsidies for fuel and introducing other measures during his first month in office, the new President demonstrated his willingness to take courageous steps.

Following the elections held in April, nine parties held seats in Parliament; by the end of the year, the majority of MPs were largely affiliated with the opposition coalition led by Prabowo Subianto, who had lost the presidential elections by a narrow margin.

As regards the question as to what extent and in which respect they were willing to support the President’s reform programme, most of the parties were deeply divided.

### 3.4.3.5.1.3. Cambodia

The domestic policy situation has been stabilising in Cambodia. After Parliament had been blocked for months, a breakthrough was achieved at the end
of July in the negotiations ongoing since 2013 between the united opposition CNRP and the government led by the CPP under Prime Minister Hun Sen. The government agreed to fill the positions on the heavily criticised National Election Commission with new individuals. In autumn, the opposition’s rights in parliament were expanded and strengthened, which enable it to chair parliamentary commissions.

3.4.3.5.1.4. Laos
While political development stagnated, Laos repeatedly came under what was sometimes massive pressure from neighbouring states due to several controversial dam projects. Its neighbours fear that these projects will lead to the reduction in the fish population in the Mekong, thus depriving the people along the river who depend on fishing of their livelihoods.

3.4.3.5.1.5. Malaysia
Malaysia saw an accentuation of the political line pursued by the governing party UMNO in favour of the Muslim majority population and measures taken against members of the opposition. Critics accused Prime Minister Najib of deviating from his previous announcements of taking better account of the interests of ethnic and religious minorities.

3.4.3.5.1.6. Myanmar
In Myanmar, the opening of the country, which was started in 2011, and the associated reforms entered a decisive stage. Domestic policy discourse focused on the reform of the constitution, which is to be completed ahead of the presidential elections scheduled for autumn 2015. Topics addressed included inter alia a further democratisation through reductions of the military’s privileges as well as the question of a candidacy of Nobel Peace Prize Laureate Aung San Suu Kyi. Although it had been possible to further defuse the numerous ethnic conflicts in Myanmar and despite intensive negotiations between the central government and armed ethnic groups, it has, however, not been possible to achieve a nationwide ceasefire.

3.4.3.5.1.7. Philippines
The government of the Philippines led by President Benigno Aquino continued to consistently implement its anti-corruption policy. The challenges to be faced included the fight against poverty and promoting inclusive economic growth.

After decades of armed clashes on the island of Mindanao, which are estimated to have claimed 150,000 lives, and several thwarted attempts towards securing a permanent peaceful resolution of the conflict, a comprehensive peace agreement was signed between the government and the Moro Islamic
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Liberation Front (MILF) on 27 March. This step paved the way for developing a fundamental law for the planned autonomous region of Bangsamoro, which has to be approved by the Philippine Congress and subsequently submitted to a popular referendum in the affected regions of Mindanao.

At foreign policy level, competing sovereignty claims in the South China Sea led to temporary tensions with China. China strictly opposed the international arbitration proceedings under the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea initiated by the Philippine government and insisted on bilateral negotiations. At the end of April, these tense relations with China led to the signing of an Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement (EDCA) with the USA during a visit President Barack Obama was paying to the Philippines.

3.4.3.5.1.8. Singapore

In Singapore, the discussions on demographic development and the “Singapore social model” under which the focus was placed on the construction of apartments and the development of public transport, continued. Pension insurance systems were also adapted. At the same time, the development of Singapore’s position as a business location was further pursued.

3.4.3.5.1.9. Thailand

The situation in Thailand came to a head at the beginning of the year, after the constitutional court had declared the elections of 2 February invalid as they had not been conducted nationwide on the same day. This had, however, not been possible mainly because of the ongoing protests by government opponents. As a consequence of this judgement, the government led by Prime Minister Yingluck Shinawatra was only provisionally in office and the conservative opposition stepped up its pressure on the government. On 20 May, the Supreme Command of the Thai Army led by General Prayuth Chan-o-cha declared martial law in order to “maintain peace and security”. On 22 May, the ongoing negotiations between government and opposition in Bangkok were dissolved by the army, the constitution was suspended and the government arrested. At the same time, human and citizens’ rights enshrined in the constitution of 2007 were de facto largely suspended and censorship introduced. Political assemblies involving more than five persons were forbidden and Parliament was dissolved. On 22 July, the NCPO military government adopted a new temporary constitution, which provided for a caretaker parliament to be appointed by the military and the establishment of a reform commission. On 21 August, this caretaker parliament elected General Prayuth Chan-o-cha Prime Minister of an interim government. A reform plan for a return to democracy had previously been adopted, which provides for the preparation of a new constitution and the holding of elections at the end of 2015.
Asia

3.4.3.5.1.10. Vietnam

In Vietnam, the government sought to stimulate the economy and implement the targets aimed at boosting economic growth. Success in countering high inflation rates and improving the balance of trade was offset by challenges faced in the state-owned sector and the banking industry. At domestic policy level, initial preparations for the next Congress of the Communist Party of Vietnam in 2016 were launched, which translated in a tougher attitude towards critics of the regime. At foreign policy level, Vietnam continued its course towards integration into international institutions. Among other things it held the chair of the IAEA Board of Governors. In May, the installation of an oil drilling platform by China in the contested waters of the South China Sea led to considerable bilateral tensions.

3.4.3.5.1.11. Timor-Leste

Timor-Leste, which had applied for ASEAN membership in 2011, has been able to largely consolidate since the presidential and parliamentary elections of 2012. The focus was placed on building up the country and its structures as well as on fighting corruption. The planned start of the replacement of the first generation of politicians was postponed after Prime Minister Xanana Gusmão had called off his resignation from politics announced for September. The country was still largely dependent on income from natural gas resources which make up more than 90% of the budget. Concerning the distribution of the revenues generated by the joint exploitation of the natural gas resources with Australia, Timor-Leste turned to the International Court of Justice (ICJ) in March. The proceedings were suspended in September to gain time for a negotiated solution.

3.4.3.5.2. SAARC States

From 26 to 27 November, the 18th Summit of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) was held in Kathmandu (Nepal). The eight member states (Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka) signed a Framework Agreement for Energy Cooperation (cross-border grid connections). The goal of gradually building up a regional economic community was confirmed by the Summit Declaration.

3.4.3.5.2.1. Afghanistan

General elections were held on 5 April. In the subsequent run-off ballot on 14 June, Ashraf Ghani won the absolute majority of votes. Ghani and his opponent Abdullah Abdullah, however, accused each other of massive electoral fraud. Ultimately, agreement was reached on a National Unity Government in which Ashraf Ghani, holding the office of President of State, and Abdullah Abdullah in his capacity as quasi Prime Minister (CEO), are to govern the country together.
The security situation continued to pose a central challenge to the government. On 31 December, the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) terminated its mandate, which covered provision of support to the Afghan government in enforcing and maintaining internal security and respect for human rights as well as training and supporting the Afghan security forces. From 1 January onwards, the successor to ISAF, the Resolute Support Mission (RSM), is to advise and assist in training and developing efficient civilian and military capabilities and Afghan security forces’ structures. Austria seconded three staff officers to the headquarters in Kabul. Austria also contributed four police officers to the EU police mission (EUPOL Afghanistan), active in the country since 2007 and mandated with assisting the Afghan government in building up an independent civil police force that meets international standards. The Mandate of the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) was again extended for another year (until March 2015).

3.4.3.5.2.2. Bangladesh

On 5 January, parliamentary elections were held in Bangladesh. The Awami League (AL) succeeded in winning a three-quarter majority in parliament and its leader Sheikh Hasina secured the office of Prime Minister. The opposition Bangladesh Nationalist Party boycotted the elections and does not recognise the current government. The special war crimes tribunals set up to investigate crimes committed during the 1971 war of independence sentenced several perpetrators, including leading opposition party officials. The death sentences pronounced in this context met with international criticism, including from the EU.

Since the Rana Plaza disaster, when more than 1,000 employees died when a garment factory collapsed, the EU together with the ILO and national authorities have worked towards improving working conditions and workers’ protection in the textile industry.

3.4.3.5.2.3. Bhutan

Bhutan and Austria celebrated the 25th anniversary of their diplomatic relations. Furthermore, the Bhutan Country Strategy 2014–2018, which had been developed together with Bhutan, was adopted by Austrian Development Cooperation (ADC). This means that Bhutan is to remain a priority country of ADC also in the years to come. The EU announced that it intends to increase development assistance for Bhutan, which is to be tripled to 42 million euros for the period 2014–2020 in the priority areas “civil society and local administration” as well as “sustainable agriculture and forestry”.

3.4.3.5.2.4. India

In the parliamentary elections in April and May, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) – which had previously been in opposition – won the absolute majority
and succeeded in further consolidating its domestic position in the course of the year, inter alia by scoring electoral successes in a number of states. In the Muslim-dominated state of Jammu and Kashmire it forms part of the respective local government coalitions (as junior partner to a regional party).

The priorities defined by the new government led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi focus on economic development (fighting inflation, facilitating foreign direct investment), improving India’s infrastructure (transport, energy, water, urban development) and good governance (transparent and efficient governance, e-government). In line with a careful course towards liberalisation, one of the first measures taken included increasing the upper limits for direct foreign investments in individual sectors (for instance in the railway infrastructure area). In the spirit of “Make in India”, Prime Minister Modi intends to position India as a global workbench.

India’s more pro-active approach in foreign policy is reflected in visits to neighbouring states, to Australia, Japan, the USA and Europe as well as in the visits paid by the Presidents of China and Russia to India. Alongside bilateral visit diplomacy, Prime Minister Modi also used multilateral fora in order to strengthen his image as a global player both at national and international level. Modi’s participation at the UNGA, the ASEAN and the G20 summits were an expression of this strategy. The accumulation of high-level visits following the take-over of government duties by the BJP in May highlights India’s increasing importance as a political partner at global level.

3.4.3.5.2.5. Maldives

In March, parliamentary elections were held in the Maldives in which the Progressive Party of Maldives (PPM) was able to win a clear majority. Reaching a turnout of 78 %, the elections were conducted without major incidents and described as peaceful and transparent by international observers (EU, Commonwealth).

3.4.3.5.2.6. Nepal

In Nepal, Sushil Koirala was elected Prime Minister by the Nepali Congress Party in February and formed a coalition government together with the Communist Party of Nepal-Unified Marxist Leninist (CPN-UML). Even eight years after the end of the civil war, it was, however, not possible to complete the Nepalese constitutional process.

3.4.3.5.2.7. Pakistan

At domestic policy level, the focus was on continuing the fight against terrorism. Extremist violence against institutions of the state and people of another faith (especially within the Muslim community) was clearly on the rise. After peace talks between the government led by Nawaz Sharif and the
Taliban had failed, the military offensive Zarb-e-Azb against terrorist groups in the tribal areas (North Waziristan) commenced in June. Reacting to this military operation, an especially brutal attack was launched on a public army school in Peshawar on 16 December in which at least 135 students and pupils were killed. In the second half of the year, there were large-scale demonstrations by followers of the opposition parties led by Imran Khan (PTI, Pakistan Movement for Justice) and Muhammad Tahir-ul-Qadri (PTA, Pakistan People’s Movement) calling for the resignation of Prime Minister Sharif.

3.4.3.5.2.8. Sri Lanka

Austria and Sri Lanka celebrated the 60th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations. Sri Lanka made further progress in the field of economic development and reconstruction.

So far, however, no political solution has been found for resolving the conflict between the Tamil minority and the Singhalese majority population. A resolution adopted by the Human Rights Council criticised Sri Lanka for its poor implementation of the recommendations by the Lessons Learnt and Reconciliation Commission (LLRC) and called for an independent international investigation of the human rights violations in the final stages of the civil war. The government rejected the resolution. The decision to annul – on procedural grounds – the placing of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) on the list of terrorist organisation, taken by the European Court of Justice (ECJ) in October, triggered unrest in Sri Lanka.

3.5. Australia and Oceania

3.5.1. Australia

In its first year in office, the conservative coalition government led by Prime Minister Tony Abbott abolished the climate protection and mining taxes introduced by the preceding Labour government. The number of illegal landings of refugee boats (from September 2013 to the end of July there were 23 boats with a total of 1,263 individuals on board) declined drastically as a result of restrictive measures and transfer of asylum seekers to camps in Nauru and Papua New Guinea. Proposed in May, the budget which provides for deep cuts especially in the fields of healthcare services, social benefits, in the education sector and in international development assistance has not yet been adopted and/or fully implemented, inter alia because of split voting relations in the Senate.

In December, Prime Minister Abbott carried out a larger government reshuffle. The priorities of government activities for the next year will be family and employment.
Australia and Oceania

At foreign policy level, Australia was active and successful, inter alia during its membership of the UNSC and especially in hosting the G20 meeting in Brisbane in November. After long years of negotiations, free trade agreements were signed with China and South Korea and an Economic Partnership Agreement with Japan.

Several commemorative events (Gallipolli, ANZAC) were held in the context of the centennial of the outbreak of the First World War.

3.5.2. New Zealand

At the parliamentary elections in July, the conservative governing party (National Party) led by Prime Minister John Key won the absolute majority – against the background of a successful economic policy and a still not consolidated opposition. New Zealand’s clear election to the UNSC for the period 2015–2016 is a major foreign policy success.

3.5.3. Oceania

The main items on the agenda of the meeting held by the Pacific Island Forums (PIF) at the end of July in Palau were measures against climate change, healthcare issues and Fiji’s potential re-accession to the Forum after the parliamentary elections had been conducted in a democratic atmosphere in September.

Parliamentary elections were also conducted in Vanuatu, the Solomon Islands and Tonga. These were the first democratic elections to be held on the Solomon Islands since the completion of the military component of the Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands (RAMSI).
4. Security Policy Dimension

4.1. Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP)

The Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP), strengthened by the Treaty of Lisbon of 1 December 2009, is an integral element of the CFSP (see Chapter 2.6.1.1.). The Treaty of Lisbon furthermore provides for a deepening of CSDP by introducing a mutual assistance clause among EU Member States, a broadening of the “Petersberg tasks”, the improvement of cooperation within the European Defence Agency, a commitment to take measures to improve and update their military capacities and make their capabilities available to the EU to implement CSDP, the possibility of setting up Permanent Structured Cooperation in the military field, and the strengthening of the role of the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and – while not regulated in the CFSP framework yet being closely connected with it – the introduction of a solidarity clause among EU Member States. Concrete steps towards the implementation of Permanent Structured Cooperation have not been taken thus far.

4.1.1. Ongoing CSDP Operations and Missions and Austria’s Involvement

The following missions/operations were conducted under CSDP in the reporting year:

Civilian CSDP missions:
- EUBAM Rafah (Palestinian territories)
- EUBAM Libya
- EUCAp Nestor (Djibouti, Kenya, Seychelles, Somalia and Tanzania)
- EUCAP Sahel Niger
- EUCAP Sahel Mali
- EULEX Kosovo (with Austrian involvement)
- EUMM Georgia (with Austrian involvement)
- EUAM Ukraine (with Austrian involvement)
- EUPOL Afghanistan
- EUPOL COPPS (Palestinian territories; with Austrian involvement)
- EUSEC RD Congo (with Austrian involvement)

Military CSDP Operations:
- EUFOR Althea (Bosnia and Herzegovina; with Austrian involvement)
- EU NAVFOR Atalanta (at the Horn of Africa)
- EUTM Mali (with Austrian involvement)
• EUTM Somalia
• EUFOR RCA (Central African Republic; with Austrian involvement)

For further information on individual missions/operations, see the respective country sections (Chapter 3).

4.1.2. Development of civilian and military Crisis Management Capabilities

After an extended period of time, the European Council of December 2013 once again dealt intensively with CFSP and launched an impetus for its further development, especially with a view to the priority areas of increasing the effectiveness and visibility of CSDP, enhancing the development and visibility of military capabilities, intensifying the development of military capabilities and strengthening Europe’s defence industry. The results of the December 2013 Council are reflected in its Conclusions and in the Conclusions adopted by the External Relations Council in November and endorsed by the European Council. Together, the two conclusions make up a comprehensive package of tasks aimed at sustainably increasing the efficiency and effectiveness of CSDP in the medium to long term.

In 2014, these work assignments were negotiated in a range of different bodies. In November, the External Relations Council in the defence ministers’ format was able to take the following decisions:

• Progress report on the initiative aimed at capacity building by partner countries and regional organisations;
• Adoption of a policy framework for EU cyber-defence;
• Adoption of a policy framework for systematic and long-term cooperation in the defence sector.

Progress was achieved in the following areas:

• Implementation of the Comprehensive Approach including a pertinent action plan;
• Adoption of the cross sectorial EU Maritime Security Strategy by the Council and its ongoing translation into concrete actions;
• Ongoing work on training, rapid response, interoperability and the security and protection of the deployed personnel;
• Development of concrete support to border management in the Sahel/Saharan region as part of the Action Plan implementing the EU Sahel Strategy;
• Strengthening the links between external and internal security, notably through a more structured approach to cooperation between the CSDP missions and operations and Freedom/Security/Justice stakeholders, notably the EU Agencies (EUROPOL, FRONTEX and CEPOL) and with INTERPOL;
Security Policy Dimension

- The importance of revisiting the priority areas identified at Feira European Council and fully implementing the Civilian Capability Development Plan and further developing tools to address identified gaps.

- Ongoing deliberations on the use of Article 44 TEU.

Another important topic of discussion was the concept of high utility force packages that are available at short notice and can be rapidly tailored to fulfil specific missions (“Battlegroups”). Based on a semi-annual rotation system, two such groups that include approximately 1,500 personnel are available and, if necessary, capable of being deployed within 5 to 15 days. It is generally recognised that exercises such as “Multi Layer 2014”, for instance, conducted in October and November, are important for interoperability, modernisation of the armed forces and the promotion of common European standards. The battlegroups have, however, not yet been deployed as the concept is still being questioned by several EU states. Concrete discussion results are not yet available.

In terms of practical crisis management activities in the operational area, the EU increasingly has to take account of the fact that there are often a large number of international organisations dealing with the various aspects of a crisis in operational settings. This requires a particularly high level of cooperation and sharing of labour on the ground based on comparative advantages, especially between the UN, NATO, (see Chapter 4.3.), OSCE and African Union (AU). After this topic had been discussed by the EU Member States and other important players in the political, military, development policy and humanitarian sector, the Council in May adopted the new concept of a “comprehensive approach” by the EU and invited the EU HR to prepare an action plan.

The Joint Statement on EU-UN Co-operation in Crisis Management (2007) provides for close coordination between both organisations in the fields of conflict prevention, mediation, peacekeeping and peace building. Regular joint meetings promote Implementation of EU-UN cooperation on crisis management. Where CSDP and UN missions have been conducted in the same region (in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Somalia, Central African Republic and Kosovo), experience has shown that efficient and well-functioning cooperation between the EU and the UN plays a key role in maintaining international peace and security. The EU also fully supports the “New Horizon” initiative towards reforming UN peacekeeping operations, which was launched by the UN Secretariat in 2009.

Cooperation between both organisations was continued. In line with the “Berlin Plus Agreement”, the CSDP operation EUFOR Althea in Bosnia and Herzegovina is thus carried out by accessing and using NATO capabilities and facilities. EU and NATO are also jointly engaged in crisis management operations in Afghanistan and in Kosovo – the EU with civilian capabilities, while NATO in both cases assumes military tasks. In the seas around
the Horn of Africa there is close coordination between the EU operation EU NAVFOR Atalanta and the NATO operation Ocean Shield aimed at fighting piracy off the coast of Somalia. When building up military capabilities, the EU also works in coordination with NATO whose membership also includes 22 EU Member States. In this context, it is ensured that the requirements to be fulfilled by the Member States’ armed forces in the framework of the EU and NATO are compatible with and/or complement each other. Cooperation in the field of cyber security has also becoming increasingly important. The European Council pointed out that the above mentioned CSDP reforms are to be implemented in close cooperation with NATO and are to be fully aligned with NATO planning processes.

Cooperation between the EU and the OSCE is especially close in the Western Balkans and in the states covered by European Neighbourhood policy, where both organisations are actively contributing towards building up and strengthening democratic and rule of law institutions.

4.2. OSCE

4.2.1. The OSCE Security Community against the Background of the Ukraine Crisis

OSCE activities in 2014 focused on Ukraine. The fact that President Yanukovych fled the country following the escalation of events in Maidan Square and the formation of a transitional government by the Ukrainian parliament triggered a spiral of events, which in the subsequent weeks and months led to the sealing off of and a referendum on the Crimea as well as armed conflict in eastern Ukraine. Right from the outset, a joint reaction in the OSCE framework proved difficult because of the fundamentally different assessment of the events on the part of a large majority of participating States and Russia. Nevertheless the Swiss Chairmanship succeeded in establishing the OSCE as the key platform for dialogue on the crisis and also to develop substantial tools for dealing with the crisis. The events, however, revealed the huge loss of trust among participating States. Especially the referendum on the Crimea, which was not held in accordance with international law, and support given to the insurgents in eastern Ukraine by way of arms and fighters from Russia are incompatible with the OSCE’s fundamental values. The major challenge to be faced by the OSCE in the coming years is thus not only dealing with the concrete impacts of the Ukraine crisis, but strengthening the OSCE security system against the background of these developments. The 40th anniversary of the signing of the Helsinki Final Act in 2015, was originally intended to provide the framework for the adoption of measures aimed at modernising the OSCE. Against the background of the crisis described above, the starting point has changed. 2015 will thus rather have to mark the start of a process
that aims to bring about a gradual and comprehensive renewal of the foundations of the European security architecture.

Austria’s offer to assume OSCE Chairmanship in 2017 was accepted by a decision taken at the Basel Ministerial Council meeting in December and also has to be considered in the light of these challenges.

The Ukraine crisis has thus not only reflected the political limitations of an organisation that is based on the principle of consensus, but also illustrated the virtually unique operational capabilities: not only was it possible, with verification measures in the military field and special missions by the institutions and the Secretariat, to use all available information and stabilisation tools – but also and on top of that, it was possible to establish a monitoring mission and a mission to observe individual checkpoints between Russia and Ukraine as well as to set up a new instrument for political dialogue in the country. (See Chapters 4.2.2. and 3.1.5.1.)

4.2.2. Regional Issues and Field Activities

The OSCE maintained 19 field operations in South East Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), to which a significant share of the OSCE budget (70 %) and human resources are allocated. The increase in field operations over the previous year is attributable to the outbreak of the crisis in and around Ukraine. By deploying the “Special Monitoring Mission Ukraine” (SMM) and an “Observer Mission at the Russian Checkpoints in Gukovo and Donetsk” (OM), the OSCE could make a sustainable contribution towards stabilising the situation on the ground. Austria seconded a total of 30 civilian experts to field operations, the vast majority of whom were active in Ukraine (14 observers by the end of the year) and in South East Europe.

With regard to funding provided by Austria to OSCE projects, the focus was on Ukraine, ODIHR and the High Commissioner on National Minorities. Austria also provided a training programme for SMMU observers to be deployed in Ukraine. From a regional point of view, the focus was placed, apart from on Ukraine, on Central Asia and South East Europe.

4.2.2.1. South East Europe

Apart from the mission in Ukraine, the OSCE’s biggest field operations are in South East Europe, in particular in Kosovo and in Bosnia and Herzegovina. In addition, the OSCE maintains field presences in Albania, Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia.

Although the situation in many parts of South East Europe is largely stabilising – a fact, which was also taken account of by a relevant reduction in the budgets allocated to field operations in this region, these OSCE opera-
sions represent an important contribution towards strengthening democratic and rule of law structures and consolidating multi-ethnic societies in South East Europe. With respect to the OSCE’s central tasks, i.e. promoting respect for human rights and minority rights, freedom of media, strengthening of democratic structures and control mechanisms governed by the rule of law at national and local level, fostering of an active civil society, combating corruption as well as strengthening the judiciary and law enforcement authorities, activities increasingly shift towards strengthening local administrative and political structures. Attention is also increasingly being paid to promoting regional cooperation and the need for regional interlinking between field operations.

4.2.2.2. Moldova/Transnistria
See Chapter 3.1.5.2.

4.2.2.3. Belarus
See Chapter 3.1.5.3.

4.2.2.4. Ukraine
See Chapter 3.1.5.1.

4.2.2.5. Southern Caucasus
The OSCE’s activities in Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan related mainly to confidence-building measures aimed at resolving the protracted regional conflicts. The activities aimed at settling these conflicts in the OSCE context, were, however, overshadowed by the conflict in eastern Ukraine. At the same time, rising tensions among the main players in the relevant negotiating formats also had a negative impact on efforts aimed at settling these conflicts.

In the framework of the Minsk Process led by France, Russia and the USA, the OSCE strives to mitigate the impacts of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict and to contribute towards reaching a long-term solution. Following a military escalation in summer where dozens of people were killed and wounded, meetings of the Presidents of Armenia and Azerbaijan, held in Sochi at the invitation of President Vladimir Putin and at the invitation of President François Hollande in Paris, contributed to a slight easing of the situation.

The OSCE offices in Armenia and in Azerbaijan support both states in implementing their commitments in the fields of democratisation, rule of law, good governance, environmental policies and enhancement of civil society initiatives. The OSCE Representative for Freedom of the Media repeatedly criticised Azerbaijan very strongly for its repression of journalists, institutions supporting freedom of the media and Radio Azadliq.
In Georgia, Austria, together with the EU, supported the OSCE’s efforts towards defusing and settling the conflict involving South Ossetia and Abkhazia in the framework of the Geneva talks. The two separatist provinces are recognised as independent states by Russia, which has also concluded extensive cooperation agreements with both. This step yet again meant relations between Russia and Georgia were strained.

The EU calls upon the parties to the conflict not to restrict free movement of civilians by the establishment and reinforcement of new internal borders. As Russia rejects the establishment of an OSCE mission in Georgia, the EU established a Monitoring Mission (EUMM Georgia) in 2008, to which Austria contributes by seconding three officers of the Federal Ministry of the Interior and five members of the Austrian Armed Forces.

Austria supports the OSCE’s work in Georgia inter alia by contributing the joint UNDP/OSCE project for the clearing and disposal of cluster munitions. For further country information see Chapter 3.1.6.

4.2.2.6. Central Asia

The OSCE stepped up its engagement in the Central Asian states, thus confirming its role as one of the most important players in the region. Apart from the tasks assumed by the OSCE with respect to traditional security issues at politico-military level – such as early warning, conflict prevention, confidence and security building measures, mediation and fighting terrorism – the OSCE field presences placed a continued and increased focus of project activities in the Human Dimension. The withdrawal of NATO troops from Afghanistan marks a key event for the region, especially in terms of security and stability for the region. In this context, the OSCE field presences with their border management projects play a key role. In particular, the OSCE Border Management Staff College (BMSC) in Tajikistan, which is co-funded by Austria, provides high-quality training for border officials and staff.

The OSCE Centre in Astana (Kazakhstan) focuses its efforts on fighting international terrorism, promoting border management and the control of small arms and light weapons. Other priorities pursued include strengthening civil society, good governance as well as supporting Kazakhstan in fighting human trafficking and promoting equality among women and men. Currently, however, there are tendencies towards diluting or restricting the mandates of the OSCE presences in Central Asia. The mandate of the OSCE presence in Astana, for instance, will be changed into a programme office on 1 January 2015, which is only allowed to become active on special issues and was put under stronger control by the Kazakh Foreign Ministry.

The OSCE Centre in Bishkek (Kyrgyzstan) focuses on issues such as political consolidation, transparency of electoral processes, rule of law, conflict prevention – especially in the field of ethnic tensions, border management, fighting terrorism, more efficient use of water resources and distribution of
land – especially through improved local self-administration. The Centre furthermore supports activities towards promoting gender equality and fighting human trafficking. The OSCE Academy in Bishkek, which is co-funded by Austria, serves both as a training centre and a platform for dialogue in the region. The confidence and security building measures of the Community Security Initiative (CSI), established in 2010, contribute significantly towards improving mutual understanding and cooperation between police authorities and the population.

As the OSCE is playing an increasingly prominent role in capacity-building in and around Afghanistan, the OSCE Office in Dushanbe (Tajikistan) has assumed an increasing number of tasks, especially with respect to developing effective border management. The OSCE Office also houses the Border Management Staff College (BMSC), which is supported by Austria. By training border police officers from the region and especially from Afghanistan, the BMSC strives to contribute to ensuring secure and stable borders with a view to the withdrawal of NATO troops.

The OSCE Centre in Ashgabat (Turkmenistan) and the OSCE Project Coordinator in Uzbekistan mainly implement projects in the Politico-Military Dimension, especially in the field of border management.

4.2.3. Election Observation

Supporting the implementation of democratic elections in the OSCE region is a special task performed by the organisation, which is assumed primarily by the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR): on the one hand by providing technical support in preparing and implementing election law provisions, and on the other hand in conducting election observation missions and, as required, in following-up on the implementation of concrete recommendations by ODIHR. In addition, the Parliamentary Assembly of the OSCE makes an important contribution by regularly dispatching parliamentarians to election observation missions.

ODIHR organised election observation missions for elections at national level in seven participating States (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia, Moldova, Serbia, Turkey, Ukraine and Uzbekistan). Austria participated in ODIHR election observation missions by seconding a total of 29 observers (23 short-term observers and six long-term observers) to the parliamentary elections and the presidential elections in Ukraine, the elections in Macedonia, Turkey, in Moldova and in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

4.2.4. The Human Dimension of the OSCE

The Human Dimension is a core element of the OSCE’s activities and aimed at protecting and promoting human rights, democracy and the rule of law.
Its operational institution is the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) based in Warsaw. Former State Minister in the German Foreign Office, Michael Georg Link, was appointed new Director of ODIHR on 1 July. ODIHR assumes an internationally recognised position particularly in the field of election observation (see Chapter 4.2.3). The ODIHR’s scope covers the promotion and observation of democratic elections, the building-up of democratic structures and the promotion of human rights, tolerance, non-discrimination and the rule of law. Other areas of work relate to the rights of Roma and Sinti as well as to comprehensive activities in the fields of freedom of assembly and association, support for civil society, process monitoring, gender mainstreaming and cooperation with the OSCE’s external partners. A central task fulfilled by ODIHR consists of monitoring the implementation of commitments under the entire Human Dimension and in particular the organisation of regular implementation meetings.

The 18th Human Dimension Implementation Meeting (HDIM) was held in Warsaw from 22 September to 3 October. Traditionally, the HDIM has been the most important forum for exchange between OSCE participating States and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs). With a record of 1,234 participants, including 700 representatives from some 460 NGOs, attendance was the highest ever. The individual modules dealt with topics that are also priorities of Austria’s human rights policy: freedom of thought, conscience, religion or belief; fighting human trafficking, racism and discrimination – especially also against Christians and Muslims; preventing violence against women and girls and promoting involvement of women in decision-making processes; freedom of expression and freedom of the media, including the safety and security of journalists; minority issues, human rights education, democracy at all levels of administration, civic and political rights, democratic elections and election monitoring, rule of law, humanitarian issues (including Roma and Sinti) as well as the activities of ODIHR, the OSCE Secretariat and field presences under the Human Dimension. As in previous years, the HDIM specified the direction to be taken by developments within the OSCE’s Human Dimension.

The three annual Supplementary Human Dimension Meetings (SHDM) held in Vienna were dedicated to the following concrete topics: “Prevention of Torture” from 10 to 11 April, “Promotion of Freedom of Expression: Rights, Responsibilities and OSCE Commitments” from 3 to 4 July, as well as “Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms in the Economic Crisis” from 30 to 31 October. A special seminar was held from 12 to 14 May on the topic of “Improving effectiveness of the OSCE by enhancing its co-operation with relevant regional and international organizations”.

The OSCE’s activities in the field of tolerance were further implemented by the three Personal Representatives of the Chairperson-in-Office: Rabbi Andrew Baker (USA, Personal Representative on Combating Anti-Semitism), Talip Küçükcan (Turkey, Personal Representative on Combating Intolerance
and Discrimination against Muslims) and Alexei Avtonomov (Russian Federation, responsible for Combating Racism, Xenophobia and Discrimination including Intolerance and Discrimination against Christians and Members of Other Religions). June Zeitlin continued as **Special Representative** of the Chairperson-in-Office on **Gender Issues**. In September, Madina Jarbussynova (Kazakhstan) was appointed **Special Representative** of the Chairperson-in-Office and Co-ordinator for **Combating Trafficking in Human Beings**.

Astrid Thors (Finland) continued in the function of **High Commissioner on National Minorities**. The High Commissioner is responsible for identifying and seeking early resolution of ethnic tensions that might endanger peace, stability or friendly relations between the participating States of the OSCE.

As **OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media**, Dunja Mijatović (Bosnia and Herzegovina) was responsible for highlighting relevant media developments in the OSCE participating States with a view to providing early identification of serious violations against the OSCE principles and commitments regarding freedom of expression and freedom of the media. In this context, the Representative on Freedom of the Media increasingly focuses on promoting freedom of opinion in digital media such as the internet and publicly criticises negative developments.

At the **OSCE Ministerial Council in Basel in December**, a Declaration on “Youth and security” and a Decision on “Preventing and Combating Violence against Women” were adopted at **horizontal level**, and a Declaration on “Enhancing Efforts to Combat Anti-Semitism” in the Human Dimension. It was, however, not possible to reach consensus on other proposals.

### 4.2.5. The OSCE’s Politico-Military Dimension

In the light of the crisis-like developments in **Ukraine**, the OSCE’s Politico-Military Dimension was a particular focus of attention. Austria actively supported the implementation of transparency measures in Ukraine and advocated a constructive security dialogue. Another concern of Austria’s was reviewing the suitability of existing mechanisms and launching a discussion on preparing future-oriented instruments for the implementation of **confidence and security building measures**. In this context Austria supported setting up a working group on risk reduction.

Austria supported efforts towards the implementation of the “**Vienna Document 2011**” on confidence and security-building measures, the Code of Conduct on the Politico-Military Aspects of Security, and the Document on Small Arms and Light Weapons and Stockpiles of Conventional Ammunition, and in particular supported a substantial further development and updating of the Vienna Document. The aim is to achieve a reduction in threshold values for the notification of certain military activities, the multi-nationalisation of verification measures and increased exchange of military information.
Austria continued to support the initiation of a strategic security dialogue on **conventional arms control** in Europe. Austria stressed the need for conventional arms control in the OSCE framework and called for the continuation of the respective strategic discussion. Discussion contributions and proposals were made at a Security Day organised by OSCE Secretary General Lamberto Zannier. Austria provided financial support to OSCE projects on small arms and light weapons and on the stockpiling of conventional ammunition. Furthermore, the Federal Ministry of Defence and Sports started training experts on the safe stockpiling of arms and ammunition in Bosnia and Herzegovina as well as in Moldova.

At the **Ministerial Council in Basel**, a Decision on “Small Arms and Light Weapons and Stockpiles of Conventional Ammunition” as well as a Commemorative Declaration on the Occasion of the 20th Anniversary of the OSCE Code of Conduct on Politico-Military Aspects of Security were adopted. Along with the review and, as necessary, adaptation of documents, it is most of all the inclusion of gender aspects in the work on small arms and light weapons that marks progress made in this connection.

In the field of **cyber security**, the implementation of confidence-building measures started by a structured and transparent exchange of information. The participating States set up contact points for dialogue on security and the use of information and communication technologies, they exchanged information on national Cyber security plans, both in the governmental and in the private area. By enhancing transparency and through networking and cooperation among national experts, special emphasis is placed on safeguarding security and freedom of the internet, freedom of expression and the protection of privacy.

### 4.2.6. The OSCE’s Economic and Environmental Dimension

The OSCE’s Economic and Environmental Dimension was dominated by **disaster risk reduction**, which was selected as the main topic by the Swiss Chairmanship. In a total of three preparatory meetings of national experts in Vienna (January), Geneva (April) and at the final forum in Prague in September, preparatory discussions were held ahead of two new decisions to be taken by the Ministerial Council meeting in Basel in December.

The Decision on **“Enhancing Disaster Risk Reduction”** calls upon all OSCE structures, and in particular also the field missions, to reflect this aspect more in their work. Prevention measures are to be taken aimed at preventing cross-border flooding and bush fires, especially in cooperation with the Aarhus centres.

The Decision on the **“Prevention of Corruption”** taken by the Ministerial Council further strengthens existing commitments in the field of good governance undertaken since the Dublin Ministerial Council of 2012. The par-
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ticipating States commit themselves to taking further steps against corruption, money laundering and financing of terrorism. The Decision calls for greater transparency in the field of public procurement, the protection of “whistle blowers”, support of the free media especially in the field of investigative journalism, strengthening ethical standards among decision-makers and awareness-raising in the education sector. Procedures for the recovery of stolen assets and funds are also to be improved.

A large international conference dealt with the security aspects of “water diplomacy” and “water management”, topics on which the OSCE intends to place a stronger emphasis in the next few years. When the Western Balkans were hit by flood disasters, the OSCE missions cooperated excellently and supported the governments in Bosnia and Herzegovina as well as in Serbia in managing the consequences.

Another conference, to which Austria made an active contribution, was dedicated to cross-border protection of energy networks from natural and man-made disasters. The potential of renewable energies, particularly in the Central Asian OSCE participating States, was also highlighted in a number of workshops.

4.2.7. The OSCE Parliamentary Assembly

The OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, with its Secretariat in Copenhagen, is made up of 323 parliamentarians from the 57 participating States. The Parliamentary Assembly has maintained a liaison office in Vienna since 2002.

The 23rd Annual Session was held from 28 June to 2 July in Baku and dealt with “The Rise of Extremism, Radicalism and Xenophobia: Challenges for the OSCE Region” and with the situation in and around Ukraine. The Baku Declaration, adopted at the Annual Session, contains policy recommendations to the OSCE and its participating States relating to all three Dimensions. Ranko Krivokapić (Montenegro) held the position of President of the Parliamentary Assembly until the middle of the year. At the Annual Session in Baku, Ilkka Kanerva (Finland) was elected as the new President. The Austrian Member of the National Council Christine Muttonen was elected as one of the nine Vice-Presidents. The Winter Meeting, which has convened annually since 2002 in Vienna, was held on 13 and 14 February and attended by some 250 parliamentarians from 55 participating States. At the meeting, a special debate was held on the situation in Ukraine, a topic that substantially influenced the Parliamentary Assembly’s work throughout the year.
4.3. North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO)

4.3.1. The Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council (EAPC) and the Partnership for Peace (PfP)

Austria has been a member of PfP since 1995 and a member of the EAPC, the forum of cooperation between NATO and its partner countries in the field of security policy, since 1997.

With up to 500 soldiers, Austria provided the largest contingent of any partner country under the NATO-led peace mission in Kosovo (KFOR) in 2014 and was thus overall the fourth-largest KFOR troop provider.

Since June 2009, the operation’s forces have been reduced in several steps and by the end of 2014 some 4,900 troops were located in Kosovo. Together with EULEX, KFOR continued to support the Kosovar police forces in maintaining a stable, safe and secure environment and ensuring free movement in Kosovo. Although the security situation in Kosovo was generally considered stable, it remained fragile in the North. The political crisis following the parliamentary elections in June did not have major effects on KFOR.

In Afghanistan, Austria seconded three staff officers to the headquarters of the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), which ceased operations and was disbanded at the end of the year. Authorised by the UN, the peacekeeping operation mainly supported the Afghan government in enforcing and maintaining internal security and respect for human rights, the delivery of humanitarian aid and the orderly return of refugees as well as reconstruction assistance. Continued assistance will be provided to the country by another NATO-led mission. The necessary agreements regarding the status, safety and security of the NATO- and US-led troops under the successor mission “Resolute Support” were signed in time with Afghanistan. On 12 December, the UNSC unanimously adopted Resolution 2189 thus supporting NATO’s new mission to Afghanistan. In this context, the UNSC stressed the importance of continued international support for the stabilization of Afghanistan. The new training, advice and assistance mission will consist of some 12,000 personnel and Austria will second up to ten staff officers. Furthermore, Austria pledged a total of 18 million euro, distributed over three years, to strengthen law enforcement (police system) based on the rule of law in Afghanistan.

From 23 to 24 January, bilateral consultations were held with NATO Assistant Secretary General for Emerging Security Challenges, Sorin Ducaru. Discussions focused in particular on cyber defence, the fight against terrorism, combating the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and energy security.

On 5 May, “staff talks” between the International Staff of NATO and Austria were held for the second time in Vienna. The NATO delegation was headed by Assistant Secretary General for Political Affairs and Security Policy,
Thrasyvoulos Terry Stamatopoulos. Discussions focused on general NATO developments – with special account being taken of the preparations for the subsequent NATO summit in Wales, partnerships, NATO-led operations and bilateral issues.

With a view to establishing the matter of protection of civilians (Protection of Civilians – PoC) in context of NATO/EAPC/PfP, Austria together with Norway set up a “Tiger Team” in spring 2013. Since the EAPC Ambassadors Council meeting in November 2013, the Tiger Team has convened several times under Austrian chairmanship. Austria, in collaboration with Norway and the International Peace Institute (IPI), also successfully organised a PoC conference in New York on 20 May, which aimed inter alia to contribute towards promoting the exchange of views on topics related to PoC.

As in the past, Austria again contributed pro-actively to implementing UNSC Resolution 1325 (2000) on women, peace and security in the EAPC framework and in the context of NATO-led operations. Austria provided financial support for the review carried out in this connection by the “Nordic Centre for Gender”.

Together with the Western European partner countries Switzerland, Finland, Sweden, Malta and Ireland, Austria contributed pro-actively to the debate on the future design and further development of NATO Partnerships. Together with Switzerland, Austria also prepared a non-paper on this issue, which contributed to the related discussion.

Austria also assumed an active role in the political deliberations dealing with developments in the Western Balkans and the Middle East and the new threats posed to security.

The Summit meeting of NATO Heads of State and Government in Wales on 3 and 4 September was dominated by the crisis in Ukraine and paradigm shifts in the field of security policy, represented by the confrontational situation with Russia after more than twenty years of varying degrees of mutual cooperation. The results generated by the summit were also substantially influenced by this constellation and should determine the alliance’s direction and focus over the next few years in a not insignificant manner. NATO remains committed to its core tasks as outlined in its Strategic Concept, namely collective defence, crisis management and cooperative security. Member States agreed on steps towards enhancing effectiveness of military capability – inter alia in cooperation with the EU – and on refraining from further reductions in defence budgets. Federal Minister Klug represented Austria in the summit segments that were open to the public. In this context, Austria also held out the prospect of active involvement in the “Partnership Interoperability Initiative”, which was incepted in order to be able to counter future threats to security more effectively in a common effort involving all NATO members and partners.
5. Austria in other European Fora

5.1. Council of Europe

5.1.1. The Austrian Chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers 2013/2014

The Chair in the Committee of Ministers (CoM) of the Council of Europe (CoE), which was taken over on 14 November 2013 by Federal Minister Michael Spindelegger, was held from 16 December 2013 to 13 May 2014 by Federal Minister Sebastian Kurz who reported to the Parliamentary Assembly of the CoE (PACE) on the work of the CoM on 27 January and on 7 April. Federal Chancellor Werner Faymann addressed the PACE on 30 January and at the CoE’s commemoration of the Auschwitz liberation. Federal President Heinz Fischer addressed the PACE on 9 April and paid a visit to the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR). Federal Minister Andrä Rupprechter addressed the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities on 25 March.

The onset of the Ukraine crisis, which more or less coincided with the start of Austria’s Chairmanship, dominated the Austrian Chairmanship substantially. All organs of the CoE dealt with matters related to the annexation of the Crimea by Russia and the establishment of separatist regions in eastern Ukraine. In his capacity as Chairman of the CoM, Federal Minister Kurz, together with Secretary-General Thorbjørn Jagland paid two visits to Ukraine. During the Austrian Chairmanship, the Ministers Deputies’ Committee (MDC) adopted a total of nine decisions and declarations on the developments in Ukraine, some of which were subject to a vote.

Chaired by Federal Minister Sebastian Kurz, the 124th Session of the Committee of Ministers was held in Vienna on 6 May. With a record attendance of 31 ministers (including the Foreign Ministers of the Russian Federation and Ukraine) as well as 14 vice-ministers and state secretaries, it marked the highlight and at the same time conclusion of the Austrian Chairmanship. Discussions focused on the Ukraine crisis. The conference was also recognised as the visible expression of Austria’s efforts in always supporting dialogue and leaving all communication channels open even if there is a difference of opinion.

On 6 May, the foreign ministers also took decisions on the report by Secretary General Jaglands on the “State of Democracy, Human Rights and the Rule of Law in Europe”, on the conflict in Georgia, on safeguarding the long-term functioning of the system of the European Human Rights Convention (ECHR), cooperation between the CoE and the EU and on the CoE’s policy towards its neighbouring regions.

During its chairmanship Austria pursued an ambitious programme, in the context of which numerous events and conferences on the three thematic

3 For a list of events see: https://wcd.coe.int/ViewDoc.jsp?id=2123363&Site=CM&BackColorInternet=C3C3C3&BackColorIntranet=EDB021&BackColorLogged=F5D383
pillars of the CoE – human rights, democracy and the rule of law – were organised both in Austria and in Strasbourg. The fight against human trafficking was the topic of a conference that was jointly organised by the Austrian CoE and the Swiss OSCE chairmanships in Vienna on 17 and 18 February under the heading of “Not for Sale – Joining Forces against Trafficking in Human Beings”. The protection of freedom of expression and of journalists as well as internet governance were other priorities on which the MDC on 16 April adopted a recommendation to Member States on a guideline on Human Rights for Internet Users and on 30 April adopted a declaration on the Protection of Journalists and other “Media Actors”.

At the beginning of its chairmanship, Austria ratified the Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention) and just prior to its end Austria succeeded in ensuring that the last ratification document required for the entry into force of this important convention was deposited, which enabled its entry into force on 1 August 2014.

The MDC adopted seven declarations on the use of the death penalty in certain individual non-member states (Belarus and USA).

Already under the Austrian Chairmanship, a two-year-budget for the biennium 2014–15 was adopted. This budget provides for an annual budget volume of 244 million euros.

On 18 December 2013, the CoE’s Enlarged Partial Agreement on European Cultural Routes was transformed from a pilot project to a Permanent Partial Agreement.

The MDC reached consensus on the composition of the Advisory Panel of Experts on Candidates for Election as Judge to the ECHR. Christoph Grabenwarter is the first Austrian to be a member of this panel.

Together with the city of Strasbourg and the French Département Bas-Rhin, Austria organised 42 cultural events, which increased the visibility of both Austria as a nation of culture and of the CoE among the people of Strasbourg and Alsace.

5.1.2. Most important Political Topics

The dominant political topic dealt with by the CoE in the course of the year was the Ukraine crisis, which also topped the agenda of the 124th Session of the Committee of Ministers in Vienna on 6 May, and the election of the Secretary General of the CoE.

The Treaty of Lisbon provides for the EU’s accession to the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR). The goal is to ensure that Union legal acts can be reviewed by the ECtHR for their compatibility with the ECHR, also based on individual complaints. For further information on the status of the negotiation on the EU’s accession to the ECHR, please see Chapter 2.3.8.
The developments in Ukraine and on the Crimea were a major focus of the CoE’s work. The MDC adopted twelve decisions – some of which were subjected to a vote – on this complex of issues. Secretary General Jagland initiated an International Advisory Panel to investigate the events in Kiev of November/December 2013 and in Odessa of May 2014. Expert bodies, including the CoE and its Venice Commission, advised Ukraine on legal, legislative and minorities matters. On 10 April, the Parliamentary Assembly of the CoE (PACE) suspended the voting rights and certain other rights of the delegation of the Russian parliament; the decision is currently in force until January 2015.

With respect to the election of the Secretary General, the MDC after having conducted hearings with all candidates, decided in a secret ballot held on 21 February to propose the incumbent Secretary General Thorbjørn Jagland and the former German Minister of Justice Sabine Leutheusser-Schnarrenberger as candidates to the PACE. On 24 June, Jagland, former President of Parliament, Prime Minister and Foreign Minister of Norway, was re-elected for a second five-year term in office which started on 1 October.

On 25 November, Pope Francis gave a widely acclaimed speech in the CoE.

In 2014, the following Council of Europe Ministers’ conferences were held:
- 16th Conference of Ministers responsible for Spatial/Regional Panning, Nafplion, Greece, 17 June
- 13th Conference of Ministers responsible for Sport, Magglingen, Switzerland, 18 September
- 16th Conference of Ministers of the Pompidou Group (Drugs), Strasbourg, 19 and 20 November.

On 9 July, the MDC adopted two new convention texts: Council of Europe Convention on the Manipulation of Sports Competitions – signed by 15 states in Magglingen, Switzerland on 18 September; Council of Europe Convention against Trafficking in Human Organs, which will be open for signature in Santiago de Compostela from 25 March 2015 onwards.

The Convention for the Protection of Individuals with regard to Automatic Processing of Personal Data (Data Protection Convention of the Council of Europe) and the pertinent Additional Protocol are currently being revised. Austria supports the efforts towards revising the Data Protection Convention and adapting it to the needs and requirements of the 21st century.

Thematic debates in the MDC: as a result of the debate on the safety of journalists, held in December 2013, an internet platform was established to promote the protection of journalism and safety of journalists to be used by journalists who find themselves in dangerous situations.

Further thematic debates were held on the following topics:
- Violence against women (co-operation in the context of the Istanbul Convention), 19 March;
The role and functioning of NGOs in the Council of Europe, 10 June;
Follow up to the Report by the Secretary General on the State of democracy, human rights and the rule of law in Europe, 3 July;
Ensuring freedom of expression on the Internet, 4 December.

During the Austrian chairmanship a draft “Guide on human rights for Internet users” was prepared, which aims to present and discuss the existing human rights applicable in the digital environment in a simple and understandable manner. The relevant recommendation was finally adopted by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe on 16 April.

On 11 June, the MDC decided to invite Kosovo, which is not a Member State of the Council of Europe, to become the 60th member of the Venice Commission.

At a conference on the European Social Charter (17 and 18 October 2014, Turin), Secretary General Jagland announced the opening of the “Turin Process”, which is to enhance the Charter’s relevance for the lives of Europe’s citizens. He described safeguarding the protection of social rights as a moral commitment that goes beyond political choices.

Already during the Belgian Chairmanship, an event was organised in Brussels on 19 December to celebrate the 60th anniversary of the European Cultural Convention.

In the context of the efforts towards reform in Ukraine, the European Commission for Democracy through Law (Venice Commission), which held its 100th meeting on 10 and 11 October, played an important and internationally recognised role.

The 3rd World Forum for Democracy that dealt from 3 to 5 November with the question “Can Youth Revitalise Democracy?” brought some 1,200 young people from 80 states to Strasbourg.

In July, the Development Assistance Committee of the OECD (DAC) decided that 40 % of member States’ contributions to the ordinary budget of the Council of Europe shall be recognised as ODA-eligible.

5.1.3. Relations with other International Organisations

The Council of Europe maintains liaison offices in Brussels (EU), Vienna (OSCE and UN), Warsaw (ODIHR) and Geneva (UN). The EU Delegation in Strasbourg participates in the sessions of the Council of Europe.

Relations between the CoE and the EU are governed by the Memorandum of Understanding, signed in 2007, which defines the framework for close cooperation in areas of shared interest – such as democracy, human rights, the rule of law, culture, education and social cohesion – and confirms the role played by the CoE as a point of reference for democracy, human rights and the rule of law. In 2013, the EU Foreign Affairs Council furthermore adopted
a strategic document on EU priorities for cooperation with the CoE. In April 2014, the European Commission and the CoE signed a framework agreement on strategic partnership.

At operational level, cooperation was further intensified. Numerous common projects and programmes for South East and East European countries are jointly prepared and co-funded by the EU and the CoE and provide – as the main focus – for more substantial promotion of human rights, the rule of law and democracy. They make up a significant share of the CoE’s programme-related activities. The EU, whose annual contributions amount to some 20 million euros, is thus by far the largest voluntary donor with regard to CoE projects. Under the EU’s Eastern Partnership policy, the CoE participates in several platforms (“democracy, rule of law and stability” as well as “contacts between people”), an activity for which the EU is providing funding of a further 33.8 million euros for the period 2015 – 2017. During the same period, EU funding of 7.4 million euros is being made available for similar partnership projects between the CoE and Jordan, Morocco as well as Tunisia.

At political level, there is a regular exchange between the Secretary General of the CoE and members of the European Commission alongside other high-level meetings that are supplemented by the regular exchange of information between the Secretariat of the Council of Europe and the European Commission. There is successful cooperation in place with the Vienna-based EU Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA), in the context of which both institutions act in close coordination and inform each other in advance about planned activities.

For further information on the negotiations regarding the accession of the EU to the ECHR, please see Chapters 5.1.2. and 2.3.8.

The CoE and the OSCE hold two meetings a year in the context of the “Council of Europe-OSCE Coordination Group” in Vienna and in Strasbourg. Agreed topics for cooperation are fighting terrorism, protection of national minorities, combating trafficking in human beings and promotion of tolerance and non-discrimination. With respect to the update of cooperation topics as requested by the CoE, the OSCE has not been able to reach a consensus. The chairmen and secretaries generals of the respective other organisations are regularly invited to meetings of the MDC in Strasbourg and the Permanent Council of the OSCE in Vienna. There is successful ongoing informal cooperation between the relevant secretariat offices. The phase of Austrian chairmanship of the Council of Europe and Swiss chairmanship of the OSCE was used in particular to further enhance this cooperation.

There is regular exchange between the Council of Europe and the United Nations. The CoE fully supports the UN initiative for the worldwide abolition of the death penalty. The 69th UNGA adopted a comprehensive resolution on cooperation between the CoE and the UN.
5.1.4. Human Rights

See Chapter 8.4.

5.1.5. Monitoring Respect of Commitments by Member States

One of the CoE’s most important tools is monitoring member States’ compliance with the commitments undertaken in the fields of human rights, pluralist democracy and freedom of expression and information. These commitments entered into effect either due to the member States’ accession to the CoE or to specific conventions of the CoE.

Monitoring by the MDC of the national implementation of the judgements passed by the ECtHR is based on Article 46 of the European Convention on Human Rights and its Protocol No. 11 and takes place in four annual meetings that extend over several days.

The PACE Committee on the Honouring of Obligations and Commitments by Member States of the CoE is responsible for monitoring compliance with commitments member States undertook upon accession to the CoE. In 2014, the Monitoring Committee dealt with ten states: Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, Moldova, Montenegro, the Russian Federation, Serbia and Ukraine. A post-monitoring dialogue on strengthening the respective country’s democratic institutions is being conducted with Bulgaria, Macedonia, Monaco and Turkey. Every two years the Monitoring Committee also prepares country reports as well as recommendations that are adopted by the plenary of the PACE.

Monitoring by the Committee of Ministers is based either on obligations arising from the accession procedures (as in the cases of Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, Moldova and Serbia). There is no specific monitoring of Ukraine, but an action plan on cooperation is in place. All monitoring processes are confidential and flexible processes and are carried out over an extended period of time.

The Secretariat issues reports on Bosnia and Herzegovina as well as on Serbia to the Committee of Ministers in less frequent intervals, while reports on the conflict in Georgia are issued every six months. In the framework of so-called “stock-taking”, Moldova is also subject to de facto monitoring. Furthermore, the CoE Offices in Baku, Belgrade, Yerevan, Chisinau, Kiev, Pristina, Sarajevo, Tbilisi, Tirana, Rabat and Tunis report on developments and programme implementation activities in the respective states. The impact of the armed conflict that broke out in August 2008 between Georgia and the Russian Federation continues to feature on the agenda of the MDC, which strives to contribute towards improving the human rights situation in all affected areas.
Austria in other European Fora

**Thematic monitoring** is related to commitments and obligations arising from Member States’ accession to specific CoE Conventions. Thus the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CPT), to which all Member States of the Council of Europe are party, carries out periodic and ad hoc visits to national detention centres, prisons, police stations and psychiatric hospitals. The goal pursued by the Group of States against Corruption (GRECO) is prompting legislative reforms at national level through mutual evaluation and peer pressure to ensure that countries comply with the Council of Europe standards. Membership of GRECO comprises 49 states (all CoE member States as well as Belarus and the USA). An experts’ committee (GRETA) monitors the implementation of the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings. The Advisory Committee of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities assesses the national implementation of the commitments contained in the Convention. The European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) focuses primarily on conducting country reviews and considers specific topics including cooperation with civil society. The European Committee on Social Rights (ECSR) monitors the state Parties’ implementation of the provisions of the European Social Charter.

The Group of Experts on Acting against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (GREVIO) provided for in the CoE Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence will become operational in 2015.

The Congress of Local and Regional Authorities in Europe (CLRAE) monitors compliance with the specific commitments with respect to promoting democracy at local and regional level, which involves all 47 CoE Member States and which has already taken place at least once in each of the Member States.

**Monitoring visits to Austria:** in 2014 CoE monitoring units paid three visits to Austria: CPT (21 September to 1 October), ECRI (3 to 7 November) and GRETA (9 to 12 December).

### 5.1.6. Assistance Programmes

The CoE assists the countries of South East Europe, the Caucasus and the Russian Federation in implementing the relevant objectives of the Council. The assistance programmes relate to the promotion of human rights, the implementation of pluralist democracy and the rule of law (political, legislative and constitutional law reform) as well as social problems, such as discrimination against minorities, drugs and organised crime. Also see Chapter 5.1.3.
5.1.7. Organs of the Council of Europe

5.1.7.1. The Committee of Ministers (CM)

The Committee of Ministers is the supreme decision-making body of the Council of Europe. It is composed of the foreign ministers of the 47 Member States or their permanent representatives (“Ministers’ Deputies”). The Committee’s chair rotates on a biannual basis, each May and November. In 2014, the chair was held by Austria (until May), Azerbaijan and Belgium. The CM generally meets once a year at ministerial level, while the Ministers Deputies’ Committee (MDC) convenes for sessions once a week. The MDC discusses political issues and especially takes decisions on topics prepared by the numerous thematic committees to which representatives from the relevant Austrian ministries and/or the representations in Strasbourg contributed.

5.1.7.2. The Parliamentary Assembly (PACE)

The Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) is composed of 318 representatives and 318 deputies from national parliaments, who have amalgamated into five parliamentary groups: the Socialist Group (SOC), the Group of the European People’s Party/Christian Democrats (EPP/CD), the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe (ALDE), the European Democrat Group (EDG), and the Group of the Unified European Left (UEL). There are 60 members who are not attached to any group. Austria is represented by six representatives and six deputies who are appointed by the National Council and the Federal Council. PACE meets four times a year for a one week-long plenary session and convenes periodically in committees. It issues resolutions, recommendations and opinions to the Committee of Ministers, national governments, parliaments and political parties. PACE also carries out monitoring and election observation activities. Since January, Anne Brasseur (Luxembourg, ALDE) has held the office of President of the Parliamentary Assembly.

5.1.7.3. The Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe (CLRAE)

The CLRAE is a consultative body of the CoE whose 318 members meet twice a year in Strasbourg for one week. It formulates recommendations to the Committee of Ministers in the areas of urban and municipal democracy, environmental protection, disaster protection and social cohesion. These issues are followed up in Austria by the Association of Towns and Cities and the Association of Municipalities, the Liaison Office of the Federal Provinces and the relevant ministries. The CLRAE monitors compliance with the commitments undertaken by its Member States and also engages in election monitoring. With a view to developing and strengthening democracy at local
level, the CLRAE also offers projects to South East Europe and the southern Mediterranean countries. From October 2012 to October 2014, the President of the Tyrolean Diet (province parliament), Herwig van Staa, was President of the CLRAE. He was succeeded by Jean-Claude Frécon (France). In October, Gudrun Mosler-Törnström, Second President of the Salzburg Diet was elected President of the Chamber of Regions.

5.1.7.4. The Secretary General

The Secretary General of the CoE is elected by PACE on recommendation of the CM for a term of five years and sets the strategic course for the organisation’s work programme and budget. The Secretary General also heads the CoE’s Secretariat and its some 2,650 employees. Since October 2009, Thorbjørn Jagland (Norway) has held the office of Secretary General of the CoE. He started his second five-year term on 1 October.

5.1.7.5. The Commissioner for Human Rights of the Council of Europe

The position of Commissioner for Human Rights of the CoE, who is independent, has been held by Nils Muiznieks (Latvia) since 1 April 2012. He prepares country reports that identify shortcomings in the respective legislation and contributes to awareness raising and promoting human rights education as well as human rights institutions (such as ombudspersons) in the Member States.

5.1.8. The Council of Europe and Austria

Austria, which has been a member of the CoE since 1956, traditionally shows a high level of commitment in the CoE and has already been represented by three Secretaries General, two Presidents of PACE and two Presidents of the CLRAE. In total, about 35 Austrians are employed at the CoE. Please see Chapter 5.1.1 for further information on the Austrian Chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers 2013/2014.

In the context of the ECHR reform, Austria supports ensuring that the highest human rights standards be maintained, including the right of individual petition. Austria’s thematic priorities include human rights issues, particularly in relation to freedom of expression and freedom of the media, issues related to internet governance as well as country monitoring in the South East European and Black Sea area. The Representation of Austria to the CoE also continuously provides interested Austrians with information concerning the objectives and tasks of the CoE.

Since 1995 the CoE has maintained the European Centre for Modern Languages in Graz.
On 12 December, the European Commission for the Efficiency of Justice (CEPEJ), an expert body of the CoE, elected Chief Public Prosecutor Georg Stawa as its new President.

In Moldova, Austria – by way of ADA – supports confidence-building measures between journalists and NGOs on both sides of the Dniester River.


### 5.2. Central European Initiative

Set up in 1989 by Austria, Italy, Hungary and the SFR Yugoslavia, the Trieste-based Central European Initiative (CEI) now consists of 18 Member States. With Croatia’s accession to the EU, the number of CEI members that also hold EU membership has risen to ten. The CEI is a political forum that strives to promote regional cooperation among the States of Central, East and South East Europe and seeks to assist non-EU members in their EU relations. CEI projects, which receive funding from a range of sources including the EU, are important instruments in this respect and play a highly relevant role as multipliers. Another very distinctive tool developed by the CEI are the Knowhow Exchange Programmes (KEP). One such programme is also funded by the ADC (Austrian Development Cooperation). After Italy, where the CEI Secrecratiat is based, Austria is the CEI’s second largest contributor of funding.

Alongside its project orientation, the organisation is increasingly developing into a bridge between the individual European (macro) regions. As a result of the Ukraine crisis, the three eastern EU Partner States in the CEI, Belarus, Moldova and Ukraine, have come to play a more important role in the organisation.

From 1 January to 31 December, Austria held the Presidency of the CEI, which coincided with the 25th anniversary of the initiative’s foundation. On 3 June, the Annual Meeting of Ministers for Foreign Affairs of CEI Member States was held in parallel to a Western Balkans conference (see Chapter 3.1.1.3.). On 24 November, the Summit of CEI Prime Ministers convened in Vienna in parallel with the Vienna Economic Forum summit. As Vienna is headquarters to numerous international organisations, the Austrian Pres-
idency placed the focus on strengthening cooperation and synergies with other international and regional organisations.

### 5.3. Alpine Convention

Together with the other Alpine countries Germany, France, Italy, Liechtenstein, Monaco, Switzerland and Slovenia as well as the EU, Austria has been a Party to the Convention on the Protection of the Alps (Alpine Convention) since 1991.

The XIII Alpine Conference was held in Turin on 21 November. In connection with the ongoing work on a Macro-regional Strategy for the Alpine regions (EUSALP), participants reiterated the importance of striking a balance between development and protection based on sustainable and innovative solutions and strengthening the Alps as living space for people and nature as well as an area for economic, social and cultural activities.

The conference endorsed the 5th contribution to a comprehensive Report on the Status of the Alps on the topic of “Demographic Change in the Alpine Region” and chose “Green Economy” as the topic for the 6th Report on the Status of the Alps.

Following the XIII Alpine Conference, Germany took over the Presidency for the next two years under the motto “The Alps – Diversity in Europe”.

### 5.4. Danube Commission and International Commission on the Protection of the Danube

Headquartered in Budapest, the Danube Commission (DC) is an international organisation made up of the Danube countries and the Russian Federation. Its task is to manage and develop navigation on the Danube.

At its 83rd Session on 10 December, the DC adopted the amendment of its rules of procedure and other procedural provisions in connection with the adoption of its Secretariat’s new management structure.

The Commission continued its work on standardising the technical and nautical Provisions and on the regulation relating to the treatment of ship-borne waste and hazardous goods. The DC furthermore adopted draft “Recommendations on Hazard Prevention in Danube Navigation”.

The DC Secretariat continued to cooperate with the coordinator for the Priority Area 1a “To improve mobility and multimodality on inland waterways” under the EU Strategy for the Danube Region. Work on an agreement on institutional cooperation between the Secretariat of the DC and the EC (DG MOVE) was continued: the Secretary General of the DC was tasked with signing this agreement.
No progress was, however, made with respect to the entry into force of the revised Belgrade Convention.

The Permanent Secretariat of the International Commission for the Protection of the River Danube (ICPDR) is based in Vienna. The International Convention on Cooperation for the Protection and Sustainable Use of the Danube River (ICPDR) has been in force since 1998. Contracting parties are the 14 riparian States with a share of more than 2,000 km² of the Danube’s catchment area. It is dedicated to promoting integrated river management of the Danube, thus implementing the UNECE Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Water Courses and International Lakes (Helsinki Convention) and the two relevant EU Directives (the Flood Directive and the Water Framework Directive).

Chaired by Bulgaria, the 17th Meeting of the International Commission for the Protection of the River Danube was held in Vienna on 9 and 10 December. It focused on a draft river basin management plan and a draft flood risk management plan for the Danube basin, which are both to be adopted by a ministerial conference in 2016. Other topics discussed at the meeting included the expansion of waste water treatment, monitoring and improving the ecological status of the Danube waters.
6. The United Nations and its Specialised Agencies

6.1. Introduction

Apart from the ongoing political issues dealt with in the Security Council (UNSC) and matters relating to peacekeeping operations, work at the UN headquarters in New York was dominated by the intensive efforts undertaken in connection with the Post-2015 Development Agenda, which shall replace the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) from 2016 on, and endeavours to fight climate change. In this context, important preparatory work was accomplished for the Post-2015 Development Agenda to be adopted at a special summit in September 2015 and progress was made towards a comprehensive, global climate change agreement. On 14 January, the Permanent Representative of Austria to the UN Martin Sajdik was elected President of the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) and exercised this function until July 2015. Austria was thus chairing this body in a particularly decisive phase of the international development agenda.

The conflict in Ukraine, the Middle East Peace Process, which has in fact come to a standstill as a consequence of the Gaza war between Israel and Palestine in August, the civil war in Syria which has continued unabatedly, the ongoing crisis in the Central African Republic, extremist insurrections in Iraq and in Nigeria as well as the conflict in South Sudan were the priorities of political work on the UN’s agenda. Another focus of activities was comprehensive measures against the Ebola epidemic that broke out in West Africa as well as the growing problem of “foreign terrorist fighters”. Alongside the numerous worrying developments, progress was, however, made in other areas, such as the destruction of the Syrian chemical weapons.

In addition to fulfilling its tasks as holder of the ECOSOC Presidency and contributing to the Post-2015 Development Agenda, Austria continued its traditional efforts in the priority areas of protection of human rights, promotion of the rule of law, protection of civilians in armed conflict (including special protection of children and women) and disarmament issues (especially with respect to the humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons).

6.2. The General Assembly

6.2.1. Procedural Matters

The General Debate of the 69th General Assembly of the United Nations (UNGA) on “Delivering on and Implementing a Transformative Post-2015 Development Agenda” was held in New York from 24 to 30 September. The Austrian delegation was headed by Federal President Heinz Fischer and Federal Minister Sebastian Kurz.

The 2014 Climate Summit, organised by United Nations Secretary-General (UNSC) Ban Ki-moon, was held on 23 September. Austria was represented
by Federal President Heinz Fischer (who delivered a statement) and Federal Minister Andrä Rupprecht.

On 27 September, Federal Minister Sebastian Kurz addressed the UNGA and delivered the Austrian speech, in which he described the crisis in Ukraine as the most serious challenge to peace and security Europe has had to face in decades. He stressed that it was not acceptable that international law was being violated and established borders in Europe were being challenged. The Federal Minister called for a political solution that goes beyond a mere ceasefire and leads to a free, stable and united Ukraine which maintains strong economic relations both with the EU and with Russia. Referring to the rise in extremism in the name of religion, observed at global level and manifested in foreign terrorist fighters, Federal Minister Kurz urged governments and the private sector to develop preventive measures in order to stop the flow of such foreign terrorist fighters, to cut off financial support to their organisations and to put an end to the abuse of social media networks in this respect. He stressed that the battle lines in this confrontation were not limited to Iraq and Syria but were in fact running right through the heart of our Western societies. Then Sebastian Kurz went on to reassure the UN of Austria’s full support for the Post-2015 Development Agenda and said that proper attention must be paid to respect for human rights and the rule of law. He also referred to Austria’s role as the host of the Second United Nations Conference on Landlocked Developing Countries in November and the Vienna Conference on the Humanitarian Impact of Nuclear Weapons in December.

On 25 September Federal Minister Sebastian Kurz participated in the Informal Meeting of Ministers of Landlocked Developing Countries and delivered a statement. In the context of the meeting on the International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons, Federal Minister Kurz took the floor on 26 September.

During the UNGA’s Ministerial Week, Federal President Heinz Fischer and Federal Minister Sebastian Kurz held a number of bilateral talks, including a meeting with UNSG Ban Ki-moon.

6.2.2. Political Affairs

6.2.2.1. Middle East

The conflict between Israel and Palestine has always been a special priority of the UNGA’s work. A total of 19 resolutions on various aspects of the political, humanitarian and security policy situation in the Occupied Territories was adopted, inter alia on the work of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA). As in previous years, the resolution on assistance to the Palestinian people, sponsored by the EU, was again the only resolution on the Middle East adopted by consensus by all UN Member States. For the first time, all EU Member States
together co-sponsored the Palestinian resolution on the illegitimate settlement construction in the Occupied Territories.

Regarding the conflict in Syria, the UNGA, as in the previous year, adopted a resolution on the human rights situation in the country in December – again with a clear majority of votes and supported by the EU Member States.

6.2.2.2. Disarmament and International Security

Disarmament and Non-proliferation of nuclear, chemical and biological weapons of mass destruction as well as arms control are central objectives pursued by international security policy.

In the field of nuclear disarmament, this year’s focus was on the humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons. The increasing relevance attached to this topic, which was for the first time specifically addressed in the Action Plan developed by the 2010 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), is reflected in numerous disarmament bodies. During the NPT Preparatory Conference held at the UN headquarters in New York in spring, the humanitarian dimensions of nuclear weapons were addressed by all delegations in their statements.

In autumn, the UNGA’s First Committee, which deals with disarmament and international security, focused on nuclear disarmament resolutions. A declaration on the humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons, co-initiated by Austria, was supported by 155 states.

Alongside the discussions held in the traditional disarmament bodies, the international community of states dealt with the humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons at conferences in Mexico and Austria: in February, Mexico organised the Nayarit Conference, while Austria hosted a conference fully dedicated to this topic at the Vienna Hofburg in December. The Vienna Conference on the Humanitarian Impact of Nuclear Weapons, held on 8 and 9 December, showed that the impact and risk associated with nuclear weapons explosions are much bigger than hitherto known. Furthermore, the conclusions adopted pointed out that there are currently no capacities available for providing adequate humanitarian assistance in the event of a nuclear explosion. At the end of the conference Austria called upon likeminded states to make a national pledge for cooperation and to undertake enhanced efforts towards disarmament, especially with a view to the upcoming 2015 NPT Review Conference.

At the end of its three-year negotiation cycle 2012–2014, the UN Disarmament Commission (UNDC) did not succeed in reaching agreement on recommendations on the topic of nuclear disarmament and practical confidence building measures in the field of conventional weapons.
6.2.3. **Economic, Development and Environmental Affairs**

The UN-wide efforts for a Post-2015 Development Agenda, which is to replace the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) as of 2016 and remain in force until 2030, dominated the agenda during the reporting period. After one and a half years, the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals and the Intergovernmental Committee of Experts on Sustainable Development Financing were able to complete their work in summer. The final documents prepared by the two bodies and the synthesis report, prepared by the UNSG, form the basis for further negotiations on the Post-2015 Development Agenda which is to be adopted in September 2015.

At the end of June, the UNGA decided to hold the Third International Conference on Financing for Development in Addis Ababa from 13 to 16 July 2015. This conference will make an important contribution to implementing the Post-2015 Development Agenda. At the “2014 Climate Summit” on 23 September, in which Federal President Heinz Fischer and Federal Minister Andrä Rupprechter participated, the urgent need for reaching agreement on a binding climate protection agreement prior to the Paris climate conference, to be held in autumn 2015, was underlined.

The Post-2015 Development Agenda was also a central topic on the agenda of the **Second Committee** of the UNGA (Economic and Social Affairs). A large number of resolutions on various issues such as state debt, environmental aspects, biodiversity, the least developed countries, sustainable agriculture, water, climate change and the shaping of the follow-up processes to the Rio+20 Conference and sustainable development in general were addressed. For the second time since 2011, Austria introduced a resolution on strengthening supreme audit institutions and thus again made a contribution to promoting transparency, efficiency and accountability in public administration – this time with a view to the Post-2015 Development Agenda.

For further information on the Economic and Social Council, please also see Chapter 6.5. For further information on international environmental aspects, please also see Chapter 13.

6.2.4. **Human Rights**

Please see Chapter 8.2.

6.2.5. **International Drug Control**

The Vienna-based **United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC)** coordinates all drug-related UN activities, assists Member States in implementing the drug conventions and is responsible for planning and implementing programmes aimed at fighting illicit drugs. Austria continued to support the UN efforts, especially in the context of UNODC, aimed at promoting inter-
national cooperation based on a balanced approach which takes account of human rights and health-related aspects. It also provided voluntary contributions to the funding of numerous international projects and programmes aimed at fighting drugs.

The United Nations Commission on Narcotic Drugs (CND), which meets annually in Vienna, is the central intergovernmental institution for formulating and implementing the UN’s drug policy. The CND held its 57th session from 13 to 21 March. Federal Minister Alois Stöger represented Austria at the CND’s high-level segment (13 to 14 March). At this session, a Joint Ministerial Statement on the Mid-term Review of the Political Declaration and the 2009 Plan of Action building on it, were adopted. The statement highlights the importance of an integrated and balanced strategy and the importance of the UNODC’s work in countering the world drug problem. A total of 11 resolutions were adopted by consensus on various topics, such as on the implementation of the UN Guidelines on Alternative Development, on strengthening cooperation on new psychoactive substances, on education and training on health disorders attributable to drug consumption and on ensuring the provision of adequate services to drug addicts. The resolution on the preparation of the UNGA Special Session on Drugs to be held in New York in 2016, which is of specific relevance for the Vienna headquarters, was the subject of particularly intensive discussions. Based on an Austrian proposal for compromise, it was eventually possible to grant a clear mandate on the organisational and content-related preparation of the special session to the CND. On the initiative of Austria and Thailand, a special board (steering body) was installed in the context of the reconvened CND session from 3 to 5 December. Within the CND this body will thus be in charge of preparations for the special session.

In the UNGA’s Third Committee (Social, Humanitarian and Cultural Affairs), Austria contributed actively in autumn to the negotiations on the resolution on International Cooperation against the World Drug Problem, which the UNGA again adopted by consensus in December. One of the main topics addressed by the resolution was likewise the preparatory work ahead of the UNGA Special Session on Drugs in 2016.


As in the field of drug control, Austria provided support with regard to activities launched by the UN in international crime prevention. At the 23rd Session of the United Nations Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice (CCPCJ) held in Vienna from 12 to 16 May, a total of 12 resolutions were adopted by consensus inter alia on the following topics: strengthening international cooperation in addressing the smuggling of migrants, International Guidelines for crime prevention and criminal justice responses with
respect to trafficking in cultural property, combating illicit trafficking in forest products including timber, rule of law in the United Nations development agenda beyond 2015, combating trafficking in human organs and trafficking in persons for the purpose of organ removal, standard minimum rules for the treatment of prisoners, strengthening social policies as a tool for crime prevention. Together with Thailand, Austria was the main sponsor of a resolution on model strategies and practical measures on the elimination of violence against children in the field of crime prevention and criminal justice. Austria also supported side events on the topics of crime prevention, the killing of journalists and the protection of crime victims as well as an exhibition on illicit wildlife products and smuggled endangered species seized by customs authorities.

At the Conference of the Parties to the UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crimes (UNTOC), 6 to 10 October, Austria – together with Italy and France – was the main sponsor of a resolution which enabled general agreement by the Parties to the Convention on the establishment of a review mechanism for the implementation of the Convention.

In the Third Committee of the UNGA, Austria actively contributed to negotiations on the resolution on strengthening the UN crime prevention and criminal justice programme, in particular with regard to its technical cooperation capacity. The UNGA adopted the resolution by consensus in December. Austria and Thailand also organised a side event on model strategies and practical measures on the elimination of violence against children, in which Federal Minister Sophie Karmasin participated.

With regard to preventing and fighting terrorism (see Chapter 6.2.13.3.), Austria works committedly towards a coherent and global UN approach that takes account of human rights and the rule of law. As in previous years, Austria again made a voluntary contribution to the Vienna-based Terrorism Prevention Branch (TPB) of the UNODC. The TPB has already assisted more than 150 states in implementing the legal instruments provided by the UN in the fight against terrorism and makes available technical assistance to UN Member States in implementing their legal obligations towards fighting terrorism.

The fight against corruption is a priority of Austrian activities at international level.

The UN Convention against Corruption (UNCAC) is equipped with a review mechanism, which invites the Parties to the Convention to implement the legal obligations they have assumed under the Convention by means of peer review. In the context of this mechanism, Austria participated in the evaluations of Luxemburg (together with Switzerland) and Cyprus (together with Nauru). The report on the review of Austria performed by Israel and Vietnam last year, was published.
Austria continued to provide substantial support to the International Anti-Corruption Academy (IACA), installed as an international organisation and based in Laxenburg as an independent centre of excellence and post-secondary educational facility for anti-corruption issues. From 19 to 21 November, the Third Session of the Parties to the Convention – which had continuously increased to include 60 parties by the end of the year – was held in Baku and focused on the establishment of the International Anti-Corruption Academy as an international organisation. In 2014, the participants of the first two-year course completed their studies graduating with a “Master in Anti-Corruption Studies” (MACS) and the second course with some 30 participants was started.

6.2.7. Social Policy

The resolutions on social development (inter alia on the topics of youth, family, ageing, literacy and social integration) dealt with by the UNGA’s Third Committee were adopted by consensus in December. The discussions on the resolution on ageing introduced by the G77 were less divisive than they had been in the past. The resolution provides for reporting by the Open-ended Working Group on the protection of human rights of older persons to the UNGA. On the 20th anniversary of the International Year of the Family, the resolution on the topic of family, which was likewise initiated by the G77, took a less controversial but rather procedural form. As a result of substantial content-related improvements, the resolution on the World Summit on Social Development was co-sponsored by twelve EU Member States, including Austria.

The 52nd session of the Commission for Social Development (CSocD), a subsidiary body of the ECOSOC, was held in New York from 11 to 21 February. The session focused on the priority topic of “promoting the empowerment of people in achieving poverty eradication, social integration, full employment and decent work for all”. The CSocD adopted seven resolutions by consensus focusing on people with disabilities, family, the CSocD working methods, ageing, ophthalmological health, the New Partnership for Africa’s Development (NEPAD) and on the main topic of the cycle. Austria contributed to the debates and in a national statement delivered in the context of the debate on social groups provided information on the cornerstones of Austrian family policy. Austria’s commitment to social development was also highlighted by the Austrian Vice-Chair of the Commission.

6.2.8. International Women’s Affairs

See Chapter 8.2.3.
6.2.9. Humanitarian Affairs

The thematic resolutions adopted in the UNGA plenary dealt with coordination of humanitarian aid, safety and security of humanitarian personnel, cooperation in providing assistance following natural disasters, the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees and on the participation of volunteers (“White Helmets”). Resolutions with a regional focus related to assistance to the Palestinian people, assistance to refugees, returnees and displaced persons in Africa. In the relevant negotiations, the EU assumed a pivotal role as one of the most important humanitarian donors. Austria supported five humanitarian resolutions as co-sponsor.

For information on general humanitarian affairs in the UN context, please see Chapter 9.2.

6.2.10. Peaceful Use of Outer Space

The 57th session of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (COPUOS) held in Vienna from 11 to 20 June focused mainly on the valuable contribution outer space technology can provide in terms of achieving sustainable development goals.

Austria continued its support to the UN Platform for Space-Based Information for Disaster Management and Emergency Response (UNSPIDER) of the Vienna-based Office for Outer Space Affairs (OOSA).

6.2.11. Administrative and Budgetary Affairs

The topic that featured most prominently on the agenda of the Fifth Committee (Administrative and Budgetary Affairs) was the regular UN budget for the biennium 2014–2015, on which agreement was only reached after Christmas 2013. The budget was set at 5.53 billion US dollars and is thus below the level of funds requested by the UNSG and below the final revised budget for the biennium 2012–2013. For the first time in the UN’s history, a reduction of just under 2 % has been made in the UN Secretariat’s staffing table. At the same time staff positions were established for the implementation of Rio+20 as well as in the human rights field. It is the first time that no political recommendations by the UN Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ) have been endorsed, as the latter are increasingly in contrast to the fundamental positions held by the EU, which calls for granting additional flexibility to the UNSG. Austria succeeded in ensuring that Vienna as a headquarters location will continue to play a meaningful role especially with respect to UNODC and the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS).

The annual budget adopted for peacekeeping operations (PKO) from July 2014 to June 2015 amounted to 8.462 billion US dollars and was above last
year's level as mandates for missions were expanded or newly established, including the new PKO in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA). It was nevertheless possible to launch a number of efficiency enhancing measures in the PKOs. As has been the case with the negotiations on the regular UN budget, it was not possible to reach agreement on the PKO budget in time. As in previous years, the main focus of discussions related to the increase in troop reimbursement rates. Based on a compromise text prepared by the chairman of the Fifth Committee, it was eventually possible to establish the latter to the satisfaction of both contribution payers and troop contributors.

6.2.12. UN Procurement

Safeguarding Austria’s economic policy interests belong to the objectives pursued by Austrian foreign policy. This principle also relates to appropriate participation in public procurement of international organisations like the UN.

According to the 2013 Annual Statistical Report on United Nations Procurement, 0.85% of all orders (goods and services) were awarded to Austrian companies, which corresponds to a total value of 136.9 million US dollars (2012: 138.7 million US dollars). In 2013, the total value of orders awarded by the UN system amounted to 16.1 billion US dollars.

The goods sourced by the UN system in Austria included mainly equipment for IT, products for medical use and labs, as well as vehicles. Services were mainly purchased in the fields of humanitarian assistance, construction, air services, engineering services, education and training as well as maintenance and cleaning.

More than 75% of the orders awarded to Austrian companies (goods and services) were placed by the IAEA. As regards the other Vienna-based organisations, the volume of orders awarded by UNOV increased by more than half of last year’s value in 2013, while the orders placed by UNIDO dropped by almost 60%.

Potential UN contractors are recommended to adhere to the UN Global Compact’s Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) principles. From 2009 to 2013, Global Compact companies were awarded an estimated share of 27% of all UN orders.

6.2.13. International Law

The main items on the agenda of the UNGA’s Sixth Committee (Legal Committee) were the debate on the report of the UN International Law Commission (ILC) during the annual International Law Week. The topics addressed related to the rule of law, measures to eliminate international terrorism, the scope and application of the principle of universal jurisdiction and the ques-
tion of whether to grant observer status in the UNGA to international organisations. The Sixth Committee also dealt with the annual report of the UN Commission on International Trade Law (UNCITRAL) and the status of the Protocols Additional to the Geneva Convention of 1949, and relating to the Protection of Victims of Armed Conflicts.

6.2.13.1. International Law Week

International Law Week, named after an Austrian proposal, brings together all legal advisers of UN Member States to discuss international law issues in the UNGA’s Sixth Committee. This year’s meeting was held from 27 October to 5 November and focused on the ILC report on current international law issues such as the latter’s projects related to the codification and further development of international law, especially with respect to aliens’ deportation, protection of persons in the event of disasters, obligation to extradite or prosecute, impact of subsequent agreements and subsequent practice in the interpretation of treaties, protection of the atmosphere, immunity of state officials from foreign criminal jurisdiction, establishment of customary international law, provisional application of treaties and protection of the environment in connection with armed conflict. Austria made detailed statements on all agenda items. Addressing for instance the topic of aliens’ deportation, it pointed out that Austrian practice was already largely in line with the draft articles prepared by the ILC. On the question of immunity of state officials from foreign criminal jurisdiction, Austria stressed the relevance this topic was enjoying in practice and the difficulties associated with defining the term “state official”. Referring to the issue of protection of the environment in connection with armed conflict, Austria advocated placing the focus of activities on the relationship between environmental law and international humanitarian law.

Under the Austro-Swedish initiative aimed at revitalising the Sixth Committee, an interactive dialogue meeting, chaired by the Austrian ILC candidate Prof. August Reinisch, was held with Special Rapporteurs from the International Law Commission on the topics of customary international law, impact of subsequent agreements and subsequent practice on the interpretation of treaties, international cooperation on crimes against humanity and on the obligation to extradite or prosecute.

6.2.13.2. The Rule of Law

The sub-theme of this year’s debate in the Sixth Committee was the comparison of national practices aimed at strengthening the rule of law by providing improved access to justice. Austria delivered a statement in which it highlighted the importance of the rule of law with respect to the UN’s three main pillars (peace and security, human rights and development). As coordinator of the Rule of Law Group of Friends, Austria strongly advocated enshrining
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the rule of law in the UN’s Sustainable Development Goals and pointed out that it would have preferred a more prominent role for the rule of law under goal 16 of the outcome document prepared by the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals.

6.2.13.3. Measures to Eliminate International Terrorism

The last few years have been marked by lack of progress in resolving open issues related to developing a comprehensive convention on international terrorism and holding a high-level conference on this topic. This year it was again impossible to reach agreement. The recommendations made by the working group provide for setting up a working group again in the 70th UNGA.

6.2.13.4. Observer Status in the UN General Assembly

Discussions again focused on applications for granting observer status to organisations where there was some dispute as to whether they met the criteria defined in UNGA resolution 49/426 or not. Two organisations (Group of the Eight Developing Countries and Pacific Community) were granted observer status, one application was withdrawn and another moved to the 70th UNGA.

6.2.13.5. Scope and Application of the Principle of Universal Jurisdiction

Discussions focused on enshrining the principle of universal jurisdiction in existing international law as well as on questions relating to its application and potential politicization. In this context, the essential role played by this principle in countering impunity was reiterated. The basis for discussion was an informal working paper (roadmap) prepared by the chair (Costa Rica) that summarises all current informal papers and was further revised in the course of the sessions and which should facilitate future discussions.

A number of delegations (including from Austria) supported a referral of the topic to the ILC in the future, which was, however, not included in the UNGA resolution due to lack of agreement.

6.2.13.6. Further Topics

As host country, Austria coordinated the two annual resolutions on the work of UNCITRAL including on the resolution outlining the new rules on transparency in treaty-based investor-state arbitration, which the UNGA adopted by consensus.

The resolution on the status of the Protocols Additional to the Geneva Convention of 1949 and relating to the Protection of Victims of Armed Conflicts was updated with references to the latest developments in the field
of humanitarian international law. It also highlighted the 150th anniversary of the adoption of the First Geneva Convention for the Amelioration of the Condition of the Wounded in Armies in the Field.

The UNGA furthermore adopted resolutions on criminal accountability of UN experts and officials on mission, the UN Programme of Assistance in the Teaching, Study, Dissemination and Wider Appreciation of International Law, the consideration of effective measures to enhance the protection security and safety of diplomatic and consular missions and representatives, on the report of the Charter Committee, on the effects of armed conflicts on treaties and on the report of the Committee on Relations with the Host Country.

The presidents of the International Court of Justice (ICJ), the International Criminal Court (ICC), and of the International Criminal Tribunals for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY) and for Rwanda (ICTR) presented their annual reports to the UNGA.

6.3. The United Nations Security Council

6.3.1. Cross-sectional Issues

6.3.1.1. The Reform Debate

The debate the a reform of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC), which has been ongoing for several years, did not yield any concrete results in 2014 either. The various states and groups of states (such as the “G4” or the “Uniting for Consensus” group) continue to hold largely incompatible positions on the size of the UNSC, veto issues and its regional composition.

Under a group of like-minded states called ACT (“Accountability, Coherence and Transparency”), Austria together with Switzerland supports an improvement of UNSC working methods in its current configuration. The objective thus pursued is to provide non-member states of the UNSC with more opportunities to contribute, make a larger number of debates publicly accessible, and improve working methods. ACT also supports greater transparency in the procedures governing the appointment of the next UN Secretary-General.

6.3.1.2. Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict

Chaired by Lithuania, an open debate was held in the UNSC on 12 February regarding the protection of civilians in armed conflict. The UNSC adopted a Presidential Statement (S/PRST/2014/3), which confirms the provisions on the conflict parties’ responsibility to protect civilians and their human rights as well as the need to prosecute violations of international humanitarian law under criminal law. In its national statement, Austria highlighted the importance of implementing UNSC resolution 1894 (2009), of cooperation with the Department for Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) in implementing a training seminar in Austria on the protection of civilians directed at staff involved in
UN peacekeeping operations, and of avoiding the use of explosive weapons in populated areas. It furthermore addressed the use of drones, emphasised the importance of systematic registration of civilian victims and damage, and of the analysis of such data. Austria also contributed to the discussions in the context of the statements made by the EU, the Human Security Network and the Group of Friends of the Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict. Recurring issues addressed in the debates were alongside the humanitarian situation in Syria inter alia the use of explosive weapons in densely populated areas, the use of drones, regulation of illicit arms trade, the Arms Trade Treaty and sexual violence.

The inter-disciplinary leadership training programme on the protection of civilians (PoC) in armed conflict, developed in cooperation with the Federal Ministry of Defence and Sports and the Federal Ministry of the Interior in 2012, was successfully continued in November with a seminar for international PoC experts and decision-makers at the Austrian Study Centre for Peace and Conflict Resolution (ASPR). At the same time, Austria, together with the ASPR, supported the UN Secretariat in holding a training course for the protection of civilians and children in armed conflict directed at leaders of peace operations. In December, this course was certified according to UN standards and will be continued in Austria in March 2015.

### 6.3.1.3. Women, Peace and Security – Fighting Sexual Violence in Conflict

Chaired by Argentina, the annual open UNSC debate on women, peace and security was held on 28 October and dealt with the topic of “Displaced Women and Girls: Leaders and Survivors”. The Director of UN Women presented the latest UNSG report (S/2014/693) and underlined the central role played by women and girls in conflict prevention and peace building. The UNSC adopted a [Presidential Statement](S/PRST/2014/21), which recalled the high-level review of the implementation of UNSC resolution 1325 (2000) scheduled for 2015, and called upon member states to review their national implementation plans. In its capacity as chair of the Human Security Network, Austria delivered a statement. In its national statement, Austria presented the efforts undertaken to advance the implementation of UNSC resolution 1325 (2000) and referred to the international symposium on this topic to be held in Vienna (see Chapter 8.6.3.). Austria also called for increasing the number of women in the PKO’s police and military contingents.

In addition, the UNSC held an open debate in April on sexual violence in conflict which was chaired by Nigeria. The UNSG and his Special Representative (SRSG) on Sexual Violence in Conflict Zainab Bangura presented the UNSG’s recent report on this issue (S/2014/181). Recurring issues addressed in the discussion included the fight against widespread impunity for sexual violence and the role of the International Criminal Court (ICC) as well as the
need to place a stronger focus on victims’ families and the situation in the camps for refugees and the internally displaced. Many states expressed their support for the relevant work being undertaken by the UN in this area and stressed the preventive aspect in the SRSG’s mandate. Austria took the floor in its capacity as a member of the Human Security Network.

6.3.1.4. Children and Armed Conflict

The UNSC held two open debates on children and armed conflict. In a meeting chaired by Luxembourg, the tenth resolution on this topic, which was supported by 47 co-sponsors (including Austria), was unanimously adopted on 7 March. **UNSC resolution 2143 (2014)** focuses on the priorities of capacity-building with a view to protecting children in armed conflict as well as on the wide-spread problem of military use of schools. The debate was dominated by the campaign “Children, not Soldiers”, launched by the SRSG on Children in Armed Conflict, Leila Zerrougui, and UNICEF, which is directed at putting an end to the recruitment of child soldiers by state armies until 2016. Austria contributed to the debate, the tone of which was clearly more positive than in 2013, by delivering a national statement and in the context of the statements by EU and the Human Security Network.

Chaired by the USA, another debate was held on 8 September in which the **UNSG’s annual report (A/68/878)** was presented. This session essentially consisted of the repetition of familiar statements and ended without a formal result. The UN Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, Hervé Ladsous, explicitly thanked Austria for its substantial financial and personal support in developing and implementing training seminars for child protection experts by the DPKO in cooperation with the ASPr. In its capacity as chair of the Human Security Network (HSN), Austria delivered a statement.

6.3.1.5. Al-Qaida Sanctions Committee

Since the end of its membership of the UNSC in 2009/2010, Austria has continued its consistent commitment to strengthening the rule of law in the UNSC, supporting – in particular – fair procedures and effective legal remedies in the sanctions committees. The Office of the Ombudsperson, established by the UNSC in resolution 1904 (2009) and substantially strengthened by resolution 1989 (2011), to which natural and legal persons on the consolidated list of the Al-Qaida Sanctions Committee may turn in order to request delisting, has enabled important progress in this respect. In the context of an informal group of like-minded states on targeted sanctions, Austria continues to support further improvements, particularly with respect to the Al-Qaida Sanctions Committee but also in other UNSC sanctions committees. In November, an open UNSC debate was held on the topic of sanctions during which the call for further improvements was made. Due to diverging views,
however, the UNSC was not able to agree on expanding the ombudsperson’s mandate to also include other sanctions regimes.

6.3.2. Peacekeeping Operations

At the end of the year more than 100,000 troops, police officers and 20,000 civilian experts were deployed in a total of 16 peacekeeping operations (UNPKO). In 2014, the Security Council set up a new mission (MINUSCA) in the Central African Republic. The trend towards equipping UN missions with more robust mandates that has been emerging over the last few years continued. The goal is to enable UN troops to protect civilians in the deployment areas from attacks and assaults. This more active role, however, faces troop contributors and the UN with new challenges. Training and preparation, standardisation, technical equipment and machinery have to be improved, which translates in a significant increase in mission costs.

In contrast to the previous year, the UNGA’s Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations, which is responsible for the DPKO’s political guidelines, was able to agree on a substantial report.

6.3.2.1. Austria’s Involvement in Peacekeeping Operations

Austria continues to build on a long-standing tradition of participation in peacekeeping missions. Since 1960, more than 90,000 Austrians have participated as military or civilian personnel in more than 50 international peacekeeping and humanitarian missions. The Austrian Federal Government is committed to active participation in foreign missions and enshrined this goal in the Austrian Security Strategy, adopted by the Austrian Federal Government in 2013.

Following withdrawal from the UN Disengagement Observer Force on the Golan (UNDOF), the number of personnel contributed by Austria to UN operations amounted to 171 soldiers including the UN Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL), five military observers with the UN Truce Supervision Organisation (UNTSO), four staff officers with the United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP) and two military observers with the UN Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO) as well as one military advisor at the UN Office for West Africa (UNOWA) in Senegal. By seconding one Austrian police officer to the UN Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) at the beginning of 2014, Austria is again among the police troop contributing countries in a UNPKO.

6.3.3. Country-specific and regional Issues

See Chapter 3.

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6.4. The UN Peacebuilding Commission

The UN Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) was established in December 2005 by the UNGA and the UNSC as a joint subsidiary organ, thus assuming a special position within the UN system. The PBC was created to support peace efforts in countries emerging from armed conflict and to assist them in post-conflict peace-building, recovery, reconstruction and development in order to avoid relapse into renewed conflict. It assists countries in bridging the frequently identified gaps between the end of a peacekeeping operation and the beginning of effective development cooperation (DC) efforts. Chaired by Brazil, the PBC again undertook efforts towards improving its efficiency and its contribution towards peace building in the respective countries. Apart from the globally active Commission, there were six country-specific configurations (Burundi, Sierra Leone, Guinea-Bissau, Central African Republic, Liberia and Guinea). In 2015, stock is to be taken of what has been achieved and recommendations are to be made on improving the PBC’s efficiency.

6.5. The Economic and Social Council

6.5.1. General Part

The activities of the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) were dominated by the implementation of the resolutions on the reform of the Council (A/68/1) adopted in 2013, the establishment of a High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF, A/67/290), and on work in the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals.

Following the change to the ECOSOC’s working cycle, sessions and the various meeting segments, including the newly established Integration Segment, were held throughout the year. For the first time in the ECOSOC’s history, a working theme (Transition from the Millennium Development Goals to the Post-2015 Development Agenda) was adopted that is also applicable to its sub-organs, the functional and regional commission and the Council itself.

The ECOSOC’s high-level week from 7 to 11 July, including the Annual Ministerial Review (AMR), the Development Cooperation Forum (DCF) and the HLPF which was held for the first time in the context of the Council from 30 June to 9 July, marked the highlights of the year.

6.5.2. Austria’s Presidency of the Economic and Social Council in 2014

On 14 January, the Permanent Representative of Austria to the UN, Martin Sajdik, took over the Presidency of ECOSOC. Due to the ongoing discussions on a Post-2015 Development Agenda, the Austrian Presidency coincided with a period of change. One priority of work was the implementation of the
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reform of ECOSOC adopted in 2013. This also included the organisation of the first HLPF under the auspices of ECOSOC, which is to become the future institutional home of the post-2015 agenda. As the ECOSOC reform is to be put into practice, the Austrian Presidency – by way of exception – lasts one and a half years, i.e. until July 2015. Holding the Presidency of ECOSOC, Austria played a leading role in the preparations for the various meetings on economic, social and environment-related topics including the respective decision-making processes.

During the HLPF, which in terms of timing was coupled with the high-level week of ECOSOC, more than 70 ministers – including Federal Minister Sophie Karmasin – from the fields of foreign affairs, development, finances, environment and social affairs, deliberated for two weeks on solutions for the pressing problems of our times, such as poverty, climate change, inequality, (youth) unemployment or the fight against corruption. A dynamic and action-oriented agenda enabled the new challenges in the fields of sustainable development to be dealt with in an appropriate way. The final ministerial declaration was negotiated under Austrian responsibility. At the AMR a record number of ten member states presented their own successes and lessons learned on the road towards reaching the MDGs. As the MDGs expire, this exercise will be held for the last time in 2015. The DCF, which meets every two years, brings together EDC experts from donor and developing countries and provides a very useful platform for the thematic and substantive exchange of experience on the practical aspects of development cooperation and financing.

From 27 to 29 May, the integration segment, which was also set up under the reform of ECOSOC, was dedicated to the topic of sustainable urbanisation.

During the Global Dialogue on Financing for Development on 14 April, finance ministers and representatives of national banks and international financial institutions met in New York to discuss issues relating to development financing. The speakers also included the Governor of the Austrian National Bank, Ewald Nowotny.

6.5.3. The United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE)

The Geneva-based United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) is one of five UN regional commissions. It is a multilateral platform that brings together Europe including all successor states to the former Soviet Union as well as Canada, the USA and Israel.

The organisation aims to promote economic cooperation among member states through the development of regulations and norms, technical cooperation in the field of transport, environment, energy, trade and statistics. Austria supports the UNECE in particular in the thematic fields of energy-
efficient housing construction and ageing societies, in projects related to trans-European roads and trans-European railways as well as in the environmental sector.

On 14 July, Christian Friis Bach (Denmark) was appointed new Executive Secretary.

### 6.6. The International Court of Justice

Of the six principal organs of the United Nations, the International Court of Justice (ICJ) in The Hague is the only one not located in New York. In 1947, the ICJ dealt with its first case and meanwhile a total of 161 disputes have been handled. A total of 70 states (including Austria) have recognised the ICJ’s jurisdiction under the “optional clause” in Article 36 paragraph 2 of the ICJ’s Statute. Currently, 14 cases are pending before the court. New cases brought before the court were those introduced by Costa Rica against Nicaragua with respect to the delimitation of the maritime border in the Caribbean and by Somalia against Kenya regarding the delimitation of the maritime border in the Indian Ocean. The Marshall Islands turned to the ICJ with respect to potential violations of international obligations in the field of nuclear disarmament by the United Kingdom, India and Pakistan, the actions against six further states were not pursued due to lack of jurisdiction.

In the case concerning the maritime dispute between Peru and Chile, the ICJ delivered its judgement on 27 January, determining the course of the single maritime boundary. In the dispute between Australia and Japan (with New Zealand intervening), the ICJ found on 31 March that Japan did in some respects not meet obligations under the International Whaling Convention.

On 7 and 11 November respectively, five ICJ judges from Australia, Jamaica, Morocco, Russia and the USA were elected by the UNGA and the UNSC for a nine-year term for the period 2015 to 2024.

### 6.7. The United Nations Specialised Agencies

#### 6.7.1. Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO)

The 29th FAO Regional Conference for Europe and Central Asia was held in Bucharest from 2 to 4 April. The meeting was attended by representatives from the region’s 47 member states including 14 ministers. Director-General da Silva stated that the nutrition situation in the region had improved; the malnutrition rate had declined to less than 5%. In a special ministerial segment the topic of food losses and waste was addressed. The discussion document was a study prepared by the FAO which provided a comparison based on seven different supply chains of food losses broken down by regions with
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low, medium and high incomes. Ministers and FAO delegates highlighted campaigns that have already been launched and range from the establishment of food banks, the use of bio energy, recycling and technological investments through to awareness-raising activities. Austria presented its successful initiative “Lebensmittel sind kostbar” (food is precious).

At an **International Conference on Nutrition (ICN2)**, jointly organised by the FAO and the World Health Organisation, the thematic priority of nutrition dominated the agenda from 19 to 21 November. The conference was attended by 172 delegations – many at ministerial level – as well as by numerous prominent figures including Pope Francis. The outcome documents adopted were the “Declaration of Rome” and the “Framework for Action”. Austria presented its food model that is based on sustainability and referred to its school milk and school fruit programmes, the Austrian nutrition plan, and measures aimed at reducing food waste as well as the importance of family-based farming.

The **41st Session of the Committee on World Food Security (CFS)** which was also attended by a large number of civil and private sector representatives, was held from 13 to 18 October. In the course of the week, two reports by the high-level panel of experts (HLPE) on the topics of “Food Losses and Waste in the Context of Sustainable Food Systems” and “Sustainable Fisheries and Aquaculture for Food Security and Nutrition” were adopted. Another highlight was the adoption of the “Principles for Responsible Agricultural Investments”, which provide a voluntary benchmark for the adaptation of national policies, programmes and agreements.

### 6.7.2. *International Labour Organisation (ILO)*

The 103rd Session of the International Labour Conference (ILC) in June, which was also attended by Federal Minister Rudolf Hundstorfer, adopted a Protocol to the Forced Labour Convention (no. 29), which was particularly actively supported by Austria, prepared a draft for a recommendation regarding the transition from the informal to the formal economy – to be finalised in 2015 – and dealt with employment policy for sustainable recovery and development.

The ILC’s Committee on the Application of Standards was able to fulfil its central task in the ILO monitoring system, i.e. the country reviews, only to a very limited extent. Although ILO Director-General Guy Ryder personally supported the cause, it was not possible to reach a consensus on commissioning an ICJ expert opinion on the contentious issue of the right to strike. A new approach towards resolving this issue is to be launched in 2015.

Austria participates as observer in the Sessions of the ILO Governing Board. In this context it can make its voice heard via its contributions to important regional groups such as the Industrialised Market Economies Group or the EU and also plays an active role in the field of legal issues as well as in supporting the standards system.
Recurring topics on the agenda were internal structural reform, crisis management, and the ILO in the post-2015 UN Development Agenda.

### 6.7.3. International Telecommunications Union (ITU)

The Geneva-based ITU is a United Nations agency in which government and industry representatives coordinate the establishment and operation of global telecommunication networks and services, in particular the utilisation of the radio frequency spectrum and the satellite orbit.

The World Telecommunication Development Conference was held in Dubai from 30 March to 10 April. Dedicated to the topic of “Broadband for Sustainable Development”, the conference prepared guidelines on issues of importance to the development of telecommunication.

At the High Level Event of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS)+10 that was convened from 10 to 13 June, preparations were made for the WSIS Forum 2015.

At the ITU Plenipotentiary Conference, held in Busan (Republic of Korea) from 20 October to 7 November, Houlin Zhao (People’s Republic of China) was elected new ITU Secretary-General and Malcolm Johnson (United Kingdom) his deputy.

### 6.7.4. United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO)

Director General Li Yong continued the reforms and/or efforts towards a thematic re-orientation process in order to make the organisation fit for the future.

During the 42nd Session of the Industrial Development Board, convened in Vienna from 25 to 26, he stressed internal progress made despite UNIDO’s financial problems and emphasised the importance of enshrining the concept of inclusive and sustainable industrial development in the Post-2015 Development Agenda to which Austria has also committed itself.

The projects supported by Austria relate inter alia to the establishment of renewable energy centres in the Pacific island states, youth employment, resource efficiency, private sector development and environmental protection in the priority countries of Austrian Development Cooperation (ADC).

### 6.7.5. International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO)

The International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) is a specialised UN agency, based in Montreal. It was set up to promote the development of international civil aviation in the fields of aviation safety, business, legislation
and environmental protection. A total of 191 state parties are members of ICAO.

On 4 April, a Diplomatic Conference, in which almost 100 states (including Austria) participated, adopted the Montreal Protocol 2014 aimed at amending and updating the Tokyo Convention of 1963 on Offences and Certain Other Acts committed on Board Aircraft.

The 7th ICAO Air Services Negotiation Conference (ICAN) held in Denpasar (Indonesia) from 17 to 21 November featured the participation of 78 countries and served as a forum for bilateral air transport agreements. At the ICAN 2014, Austria held negotiations and/or talks with 15 states.

A number of events were organised to celebrate the 70th anniversary of the signing of the Chicago Convention on International Civil Aviation on 7 December 1944.

6.7.6. United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)

The Paris-based United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) is a specialised UN agency set up in 1945. By promoting international cooperation in the fields of education, science, culture and communication/information, it strives to contribute to ensuring lasting peace and security in the international community.

UNESCO boasts the broadest spectrum of programmes of all UN Specialised Agencies, ranging from the well-known cultural heritage sites to biodiversity, science in developing countries, Tsunami early warning systems, social and (bio-) ethical issues, the promotion of cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue through to the core areas of education and freedom of the media. Africa and gender equality are the organisation’s global priorities.

Since 2009, UNESCO has been led by Director General Irina Bokova who was re-elected in 2013 for a second term in office until 2017.

Austria is represented with nine world heritage sites on the UNESCO World Heritage List. Austria is also represented with two elements on the Intangible Cultural Heritage List of Humanity (ICH) and maintains a national database on ICH. Austria has six UNESCO biosphere parks and three UNESCO geoparks.

In June, the World Heritage Committee met in Doha (Qatar). The Fifth Session of the General Assembly of the State Parties to the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage was also held in June.

Since the 37th session of the General Conference in autumn 2013, Austria has, alongside its membership on the Executive Board, been on the Human Rights Committee, on the Committee on International Non-Governmental Organisations, on the Intergovernmental Council for the Information for All
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Programme (IFAP) as well as on the Intergovernmental Committee on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions.

Austria has a network of more than 80 UNESCO schools and four UNESCO chairs. In June, a UNESCO Chair on Integrated Water and River Research Management was established at the Vienna University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences. The objective pursued by the UNESCO Chairs Programme, set up in 1992, is to establish UNESCO topics more firmly at universities and higher education institutes and to promote cooperation among universities.

On 20 June, the UNESCO Intergovernmental Council of the International Hydrological Programme unanimously adopted the Austrian “World’s Large Rivers Initiative” as a new UNESCO programme. The initiative, which was launched by the Austrian UNESCO Chair at the Vienna University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences, for the first time defines a global framework for linking research on and management of large rivers.

6.7.6.1. Austria on the UNESCO Executive Board (2011–2015)

In 2011, Austria was elected to the UNESCO Executive Board for the period until 2015. On this governing body it supports reforms as well as more streamlined and efficient structures within UNESCO.

As a consequence of the acceptance of Palestine as a member in 2011 and the resulting non-payment of US and Israeli contributions, UNESCO has found itself in a difficult financial situation. In the context of the re-dimensioning process that has become necessary, UNESCO undertook a radical review of all its programmes.

In the light of the current financial situation, Austria introduced a decision on the further development of the UNESCO Partnership Strategy at the 195th Session of the Executive Board. The goal is to ensure a diversification of financial sources in the longer term while at the same time safeguarding the largest-possible control over programming activities by the member states. The adoption of a new format of statutory reporting is to ensure that UNESCO programmes are better focused. Austria also introduced a decision on this topic.

The Austrian thematic priority of human rights was further pursued. In the context of the debate on the future of the UNESCO Committee on Conventions and Recommendations (CR) Austria coordinated the introduction of a decision supporting the retention of a strong human rights mandate. The CR deals with individual cases of human rights violations within the scope covered by the UNESCO mandate.

In the context of the 195th Session of the UNESCO Executive Board (15 to 30 October) Austria actively advocated Global Citizenship Education. On 16 May, Austria presented the brochure on education for tolerance “Spreading the Word” to representatives from more than 120 countries in Paris. Commis-
sioned by the MFA and prepared by the Graz-based European Training and Research Centre for Human Rights and Democracy (ETC), this brochure deals with fundamental principles of human rights education and lists relevant best practice examples.

Furthermore, the MFA supports a research project which examines the presentation and consideration of the Holocaust in selected countries’ school books in order to enable international comparison.

From 25 to 26 November, the MFA hosted a UNESCO workshop on the topic of “Introducing Gender-Sensitive Media Policies for Better Public Value”. More than 30 representatives from broadcasting and television stations in a total of nine South East European countries jointly prepared strategies towards enhanced implementation of gender guidelines within their respective organisations.

6.7.7. World Health Organization (WHO)

In 2014, the WHO’s work was dominated by the fight against the outbreak of the Ebola epidemic in West Africa. In this context, it cooperated closely with other bodies, particularly with the dedicated UN Mission for Ebola Emergency Response (UNMEER) specifically set up by the UN and was able to register first successes in stemming the epidemic at the end of the year.

The topics dealt with by the WHO that were of particular relevance from the Austrian point of view included the establishment of a Global Coordination Mechanism for Noncommunicable Diseases (inter alia diabetes, cancer, heart diseases), measures to combat antimicrobial resistance, healthcare aspects in the Post-2015 Development Agenda as well as the preparation of health policy contributions to the Final Declaration and the Framework for Action adopted at the Second International Conference on Nutrition (Rome, 19 to 21 November).

During the 67th World Health Assembly (Geneva, 19 to 24 May) Pamela Rendi-Wagner, Director-General of Public Health and Medical Affairs at the Federal Ministry of Health, very successfully chaired Committee A.

The 64th Session of the WHO Regional Committee for Europe (Copenhagen, 15 to 18 September) adopted inter alia a European Food and Nutrition Action Plan, which is an immediate follow-up measure to the “Declaration of Vienna” adopted by a WHO European Ministerial Conference held in July 2013.

6.7.8. International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA)

The Vienna-based International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) was established in 1957 and is an autonomous organisation within the United Nations System. The Agency’s principal task is to promote the peaceful use of nuclear
energy, enhance nuclear safety and to verify adherence to the commitments under the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT).

Austria took over the Vice Chair on the IAEA Board of Governors. Despite Iran’s constructive cooperation with the IAEA and in the context of the talks with China, Germany, France, Russia, the United Kingdom and the USA led by the EUHR (the E3/EU+3 – Iran talks), which were largely held in Vienna, fears over the potential military aspects of the Iranian nuclear programme could, however, not be invalidated. Both the negotiations and the inspections were continued. No progress was made on Syria. Discussions on the North Korean nuclear programme, which the IAEA inspectors have not been able to access for several years, were continued. Austria also supported a further strengthening of the Convention on Nuclear Safety.

6.7.9. Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization (CTBTO)

Since 1997, the Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization (CTBTO) has been active in Vienna. As not all of the 44 Key States listed in Annex 2 have ratified the Treaty to date, the CTBT has as yet not entered into force. As of the end of December, the CTBT had been signed by 183 states and ratified by 163. Its entry into force requires ratification by Egypt, China, India, Iran, Israel, North Korea, Pakistan and the USA. The CTBT’s international monitoring system uses high-tech facilities for seismic, hydro-acoustics, ultrasonic and radionuclide measurements. The monitoring system is supplemented by contractually agreed inspection opportunities. The latest international inspection exercise was conducted in Jordan in November.

6.7.10. Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW)

The Chemical Weapons Convention introduced a ban on all chemical weapons and provides for the destruction of all chemical weapons. The USA has committed itself to reaching the goal of full destruction of its chemical weapons stockpile by 2023, the Russian Federation has committed to doing so by 2020 and Libya by 2016. The main focus of the OPCW was on the destruction of the Syrian chemical weapons stockpile and production facilities. The stockpiles declared by Syria were almost eliminated; a time plan was agreed for the destruction of production facilities. On 30 September, the mandate of the OPCW-UN Joint Mission in Syria expired. On 29 April, Director-General Ahmet Üzümcü
announced the establishment of a Fact-Finding Mission to examine the alleged use of chlorine gas. At the 19th Session of the Conference of the States Parties, Myanmar announced that it would soon ratify the Chemical Weapons Convention, thus raising the number of states parties to 191.

6.7.11. World Meteorological Organization (WMO)

Established in 1950, the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) became a specialised agency of the UN in 1951. It coordinates and supports the global development of a meteorological and hydrological measuring and observation network. At the 66th Session of the WMO Executive Council, held in Geneva from 18 to 27 June, a call was made inter alia for strengthening national meteorological and hydrological service in development countries.

In preparing for the UN Climate Change Conference in Lima, the WMO outlined key aspects in relation to existing problematic areas and future tasks in meteorology.

6.7.12. International Maritime Organization (IMO)

The London-based International Maritime Organization (IMO) is a specialised UN agency and comprises 170 Member States. Austria has been a member of the IMO since 1975. Although it had closed its Shipping Register for commercial deep sea shipping in 2012, Austria as a strongly foreign trade-oriented national economy is nevertheless very much interested in safe and ecologically sustainable deep sea shipping.

Important progress was made in the field of development and improvement of technical and legal standards for maritime safety, protection against risks and environmental protection. In November, the International Polar Code was adopted. It provides for enhancing the safety of ships and crews operating in polar waters and for environmental protection measures.

As a contribution to the ad-hoc protection against risks, the IMO joined the Ebola Travel and Transport Task Force in September, whose membership also includes the WHO, ICAO and the World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO). IMO has issued guidance and information on protection measures for ships visiting ports of states affected by Ebola.
6.7.13. Excursus: The International Organization for Migration (IOM)

Set up in 1951, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) currently has 157 Member States and employs more than 8,400 staff worldwide. With its global network of offices in more than 150 countries, IOM is an important cooperation partner for Austria as it enables Austria to become active in regions where it lacks the necessary infrastructure. Since 2008, William Lacy Swing has been Director-General of IOM. On 19 June, Deputy Director-General Laura Thompson was re-elected for another five years.

In the course of its internal restructuring process, IOM alongside its Vienna-based country office for Austria, also set up a regional office in Vienna that is responsible for East and South East Europe as well as Central Asia. On 1 August, a headquarters agreement for the Vienna-based offices entered into force between Austria and IOM. The IOM country office in Vienna is at the same time the “National Contact Point Austria” of the European Migration Network, set up by the European Commission in 2003, and cooperates closely with the relevant Austrian institutions. In 2014, Austria cooperated closely with the organisation in implementing a humanitarian admission programme for a total of 1,500 Syrian refugees. IOM projects aimed at supporting voluntary assisted return and reintegration of returnees to Pakistan, Afghanistan, Nigeria and to the Russian Federation/Chechen Republic are co-funded by the Federal Ministry of the Interior. A tailored project coordinated by IOM with CARE for returnees affected by human trafficking was also supported.

IOM is not a specialised agency of the UN.
7. Austria as the Seat of International Organisations and Institutions

A pro-active headquarters policy is a constant feature of Austrian foreign policy. As home to the offices of many international organisations, Austria is a hub for the promotion of peace, security and sustainable development. Since the opening of the Vienna International Center ("UNO City") in 1979, Vienna has served as headquarters of the United Nations along with New York, Geneva and Nairobi. Due to its geopolitical position and its neutral status, Austria already played an important role as a platform for dialogue during the Cold War – a position it succeeded in gradually developing over subsequent decades.

Over the years, the Vienna headquarters has also developed into a driving force for business. According to a study presented in March by Ernst & Young on the indirect profitability of international organisations in Austria, the presence of some 40 international organisations translates in an annual positive net effect of more than 500 million euros for Austria, directly or indirectly securing around 10,000 jobs. Furthermore, the international presence also enhances Vienna’s attractiveness as a business location and for conference tourism, which also makes a considerable contribution to Austria’s gross national product.

The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) was the first to set up headquarters in Vienna in 1957. With currently around 2,400 employees it is also the largest of the Vienna-based UN organisations. Yukiya Amano (Japan) has been Director General of the IAEA since 2009.

Vienna also serves as the centre for all UN efforts towards fighting crime, drug abuse and terrorism. Since 2010, the Vienna-based United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) has been headed by Under-Secretary-General Yury Fedotov (Russian Federation), who is at the same time Director-General of the United Nations Office at Vienna (UNOV).

Another specialised UN agency that established its headquarters in Vienna is the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), set up in 1966 and headed by Director General Li Yong (People’s Republic of China). By providing technical support, counselling services and facilitating research and study programmes, UNIDO supports environmentally sustainable industrialisation in third world countries and in Central and Eastern European reform states and also fosters industrial cooperation between developing and industrialised nations.

The Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization (CTBTO), to which a high-tech international data centre is attached, has been active in Vienna since 1997. Since summer 2013, the CTBTO has been headed by Executive Secretary Lassina Zerbo (Burkina Faso).

A number of other international organisations are located outside of the Vienna International Centre (VIC). One of these is the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) headed by Secretary General Lamberto Zannier (Italy), which has over the last decade developed into an operational organisation in the fields of stability and security, and its independent OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media – a function that is currently held by Dunja Mijatović (Bosnia-Herzegovina).

Since 1965, the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) has been headquartered in Vienna. This intergovernmental organisation is tasked with coordinating the petroleum policies of its member countries and ensuring the stabilisation of oil markets in order to ensure efficient, economic and regular supply to customers.

The OPEC Fund for International Development (OFID) was set up in 1976 by the OPEC member countries to provide financial support for the social and economic progress of developing countries and is headed by Director-General Suleiman Jasir Al-Herbish (Saudi Arabia).

Since 2003, the Permanent Secretariat of the Alpine Convention (PSAC), short for Convention on the Protection of the Alps, has been based in Innsbruck and has maintained a branch office in Bolzano/Bozen. The Austrian Markus Reiterer is the Secretary General of the PSAC. Italy held the Presidency of the Alpine Convention for the period 2013/2014.

Since 2007, the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) has been based in Vienna and since 2008 it has been headed by Director Morten Kjaerum (Denmark).

In 2011, the International Organization for Migration (IOM), which promotes international cooperation in the field of migration, also established a regional office in Vienna that focuses specifically on the East, South East European and Central Asian region.

Austria’s pro-active commitment to promoting international security, disarmament and the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons was continued with the settlement of important institutions that are active in this field. This included the Vienna Center for Disarmament and Non-Proliferation (VCDNP), which opened in February 2011, and the UN Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA) that has been based in Austria since November 2011.

Austria’s position as home to international institutions was further highlighted in 2011 with the opening of the International Anti-Corruption Academy (IACA) based in Laxenburg (Lower Austria) and in 2012 with the opening of the Vienna-based International King Abdullah Bin Abdulaziz Center.
Austria as the Seat of International Organisations and Institutions

for Interreligious and Intercultural Dialogue (KAICIID). Since 2011, three institutes of the World Bank organisation (the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development – IBRD, the Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency – MIGA and the International Finance Corporation – IFC) have been based in Vienna. The office of the International Peace Institute (IPI) was also opened in Vienna in 2011.

2012 saw a further strengthening of Vienna’s position as the seat and headquarters of international organisations. By establishing the office of the Sustainable Energy for All (SE4All) initiative, launched by the UNSG, the UN further expanded the city’s position as its energy hub. The office commenced work in summer 2013 following the appointment of former UNIDO Director-General Kandeh Yumkella (Sierra Leone) as UN Special Representative for Sustainable Energy for All in August 2012.

The Interim Secretariat of the Carpathian Convention (Framework Convention on the Protection and Sustainable Development of the Carpathians) is an outposted office of the Geneva-based United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and is administered by the UNEP’s Regional Office in Vienna.
8. The International Protection of Human Rights

8.1. Introduction

The global implementation of human rights standards is a key concern of Austrian foreign policy.

The priorities defined by Austria for its membership of the UN Human Rights Council (HRC), the UN’s primary human rights body, included the protection of freedom of religion and conscience, the protection of religious minorities, the promotion of freedom of the media, the protection of journalists, the promotion of the rights of the child and the protection of children against violence and exploitation. Austria launches concrete initiatives on these priorities both in the HRC and in other international fora, for instance in the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA). Other priorities pursued in the context of Austria’s international human rights policy include strengthening human rights of particularly vulnerable persons and groups such as minorities and women, strengthening the rule of law in international relations and at the national level, the fight against impunity as well as the implementation and dissemination of international humanitarian law. Austria furthermore consistently supports the abolition of the death penalty.

The Austrian chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers of Council of Europe (CoE) from 14 November 2013 to 14 May 2014 was also dominated by its strong commitment towards protecting human rights. Alongside supporting the protection of human rights on the Internet, Austria launched numerous initiatives aimed at strengthening the safety of journalists, fighting human trafficking, promoting the rights of persons with disabilities, and protecting women against violence.

8.2. Human Rights in the United Nations

Succeeding Navy Pillay (South Africa), Zeid Ra’ad Al Hussein (Jordan) took up his position as UN High Commissioner for Human Rights on 1 September.

8.2.1. Human Rights Council

The end of 2014 also marked the end of Austria’s membership of the Human Rights Council (HRC) which it has held since 2011. The HRC is composed of 47 members and mandated with promoting and monitoring human rights around the globe. To this end, it holds at least three regular sessions a year. In the context of its HRC membership, Austria committed itself to implementing a number of projects.

Every four years, all UN member states are subject to a review of their national human rights situation, the Universal Periodic Review (UPR), carried out by the HRC. Providing concrete recommendations on improving the protection
of human rights, Austria actively participated in the reviews of Afghanistan, Albania, Bhutan, Bolivia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Cambodia, Chile, DR of the Congo, DPR of Korea, Egypt, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Iran, Iraq, Kazakhstan, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Nicaragua, Norway, Qatar, Slovakia, Slovenia and Vietnam. Austria faced the first UPR in January 2011, and the next will be held in November 2015.

In 2014, Austria again actively contributed to putting countries and/or conflicts that flagrantly violate human rights on the HRC’s agenda. The HRC thus held special sessions on the Central African Republic, on the Gaza conflict and on Iraq. In view of the constantly deteriorating situation in Iraq, the resolution adopted at the special session condemned the acts of violence committed by ISIL as crimes against humanity and war crimes, and invited the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) to investigate human rights violations committed by ISIL.

At the 25th Regular Session of the HRC in March, Austria successfully continued its longstanding initiative towards promoting the rights of members of ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities. A resolution on this topic adopted by consensus enabled a clear strengthening of the mandate of the Special Rapporteur on Minority Issues. In this context, the institutional relationship between the Special Rapporteur on Minority Issues and the Forum on Minority Issues, initiated by Austria, was formalized. The resolution initiative on the right to privacy was also adopted by consensus.

The topic of barrier-free accessibility was addressed in a panel discussion on the rights of people with disabilities, organised jointly by Austria, the International Disability Alliance, the World Future Council and the Essl Foundation. Alongside a discussion on the CoE’s data protection convention, Austria – under the quadrilateral human rights cooperation with Switzerland, Slovenia and Liechtenstein – also organised a discussion event at ministerial level on the twenty-fifth anniversary of the adoption of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

During the 25th Regular Session of the HRC, the High Commissioner for Human Rights was mandated with undertaking an investigation into the human rights violations committed in Sri Lanka during the late phase of the civil war. The HRC also adopted resolutions on the DPR of Korea, Syria, Iran, Myanmar and a number of African states. Several initiatives for a resolution dealt with the situation in the occupied Palestinian Territories. A number of thematic resolutions, including the EU initiatives on freedom of religion or belief, rights of the child, human rights defenders, and on the rights of persons with disabilities were adopted.

At the HRC’s June meeting, Austria initiated a panel discussion on the safety of journalists in which the High Commissioner on Human Rights participated. In addition, Austria also organised an informal panel discussion on the protection of journalists, at which journalists, bloggers and caricaturists from Iran, Russia, Egypt, Ethiopia, Mexico and Syria reported on the situa-
tion in their home countries and on opportunities for enhanced implementation of international standards. Together with Moldova, Austria hosted a side event on trafficking in human beings, which focused on cooperation between relevant players at international, regional and national level. Together with the Special Rapporteur on Internally Displaced Persons, Austria organised a discussion event on the African Union’s K Campbell Convention that could serve as an example for a binding regional legal framework for the protection of internally displaced persons.

Furthermore, the HRC adopted resolutions on Belarus, Ukraine, Syria, South Sudan, Eritrea and Côte d’Ivoire. On the initiative of the EU, the suppression of human rights in Belarus was condemned and the mandate of the Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights in Belarus was extended for another year. An international commission of inquiry was installed on Eritrea. Further resolutions adopted dealt with the topics of human rights and the Internet, the death penalty, the right to education, business and human rights, and the establishment of the position of a Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

At the 27th regular session of the HRC in September, the Austrian initiative for a resolution on the safety of journalists was adopted by consensus. This resolution focused particularly on fighting impunity for attacks and violence against journalists, and contains a list of concrete measures to be adopted by states to ensure accountability for crimes against journalists. Austria also successfully contributed an initiative for a resolution on fighting child mortality, in which states are urged to consider human rights principles such as non-discrimination, participation, accountability and the interests of the child in fighting child mortality. The introduction of an initiative for a resolution on the topic of transitional justice, which essentially focused on the extension of the Special Rapporteur’s mandate, further highlighted Austria’s active contribution to the HRC.

Of major political significance was the adoption of resolutions on human rights, sexual orientation and gender identity as well as on the role of civil society in the course of the 27th session. The country-specific resolutions adopted dealt with Syria, Sudan, Yemen, the Central African Republic and the DR of the Congo.

Austrian Ombudsperson Gertrude Brinek participated in a panel discussion on human rights in the justice system, which built on Austria’s longstanding initiative on human rights in the administration of justice. During a discussion on the topic of participation of children, Ombudsperson Brinek also presented the publication “Young People and their Rights”, which is the English version of “Junge Menschen haben Rechte”.

8.2.2. General Assembly

A total of 63 resolutions on human rights-related and social issues were dealt with and adopted by the Third Committee at the 69th session of the UNGA.
In the Third Committee, Austria introduced a resolution on human rights in the administration of justice, which was co-sponsored by 64 countries from all regions and adopted by consensus. It was possible to substantially strengthen this resolution compared with its predecessor (A/RES/67/166). Its text reflects Austria’s pro-active commitment towards promoting the rule of law and focuses on two priorities: the protection of human rights of persons deprived of their liberty in general and the rights of children and young persons within the justice system. The joint activities by the Special Representative of the UNSG on Violence Against Children, the UNODC and the Office of the High Commissioner on Human Rights (OHCHR) aimed at elaborating UN model strategies and practical measures to prevent and combat violence against children in crime prevention and in criminal justice systems, were positively received.

Austria belonged to a small group of states which, for a second time, introduced a resolution on the safety of journalists and the issue of impunity and also played an active role in this context. The resolution was adopted by consensus and the number of 82 co-sponsors reflects a clear increase over the previous year. The core elements addressed by this resolution include a call on all UN member states towards ensuring a safe environment for journalists and to take concrete measures towards ensuring accountability for crimes against journalists.

With respect to Austria’s active contributions in the context of the EU, the adoption of the traditional EU initiatives regarding the human rights situation in Myanmar and the DPR of Korea, on the moratorium on the use of the death penalty, and on freedom of religion or belief are particularly noteworthy successes. The country-specific resolution on the DPR of Korea for the first time invited the UNSC to examine a referral of the situation to the ICC. Although the negotiation process on the resolution on the rights of the child, initiated by the EU and the Latin American States, again proved difficult, it was overall clearly smoother than it had been in 2013. Furthermore, the EU and Austria as a member state co-sponsored the resolutions on the human rights situation in Syria and in Iran. The two resolutions introduced by the EU and the Organisation for Islamic Cooperation (OIC) on freedom of religion or belief and on religious intolerance respectively were again adopted by consensus. The negotiations on a resolution on contemporary forms of racism and glorification of Nazism, initiated by Russia, were marked by the Ukraine crisis. Eventually, the EU Member States were able to agree on common abstention.

In 2014, a number of new initiatives were launched in the field of the rights of the child, including the resolutions on migrant children and on bullying, which were adopted by consensus. The initiative for a resolution on child, early and forced marriage, introduced by Canada and Zambia as main sponsors, was the first substantial resolution on this topic. This resolution, which represents a positive example of supra-regional cooperation, had 116
co-sponsors and was adopted by consensus. The resolution on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions generated a positive result and, for the first time since 2004, the USA voted in favour of the text. The resolution on the right to privacy in the digital age, which was for the second time introduced by Germany and Brazil as main sponsors and initiated in 2013 in connection with the revelations on wiretapping/surveillance activities by the USA, was – following difficult and lengthy negotiations – eventually adopted by consensus. In some resolutions on women’s rights topics it was possible to enshrine wording adopted by the 58th session of the Commission on the Status of Women on sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights.

Austria took over the EU burden sharing regarding the resolution on combating corruption and contributed actively to the negotiations, especially on the right to privacy in the digital age, on women’s and children’s rights, on the world drug problem, on the moratorium on the use of the death penalty and on ageing. Austria contributed to the debates with a national statement by the Austrian Youth Delegate on the topic of social development that was presented in addition to the EU statements. It further contributed a national statement on international drug control, a joint statement with Croatia and Slovenia on the HRC report and a joint declaration by twelve states on the situation in Bahrain. Furthermore, Austria participated in the interactive dialogues with the Special Rapporteurs/Independent Experts on Freedom of Opinion and Expression, on Internally Displaced Persons and on Minorities. Austria also contributed to several side events focusing on fighting violence against children in criminal justice systems (involving Federal Minister Sophie Karmasin), safety of journalists, young persons with disabilities, human rights and the fight against corruption.

8.2.3. Commission on the Status of Women

The 58th session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) was held in New York from 10 to 21 March and resulted in the adoption of a final document on the challenges and achievements in implementing the Millennium Development Goals for women and girls – the priority theme of the session. This comprehensive final document analyses lessons learned and deficits in the Millennium Development Goals with respect to gender equality and strengthening women’s rights. It furthermore contains concrete recommendations to UN member states, the UN system, civil society and other stakeholders to continue and intensify development efforts for women and girls. With respect to the Post-2015 Development Agenda, the Commission supports the inclusion of a separate goal on gender equality and on strengthening women’s rights and advocates consideration of this topic in all future goals. In the field of sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights, an area which is very important to Austria and many western member states, it was possible to retain the improvement achieved last year.
Austria participated actively in the negotiations and was also a member of the EU negotiation team. In the context of its chairmanship of the CoE Committee of Ministers, Austria also delivered a national statement in the general debate and organised a side event on fighting human trafficking. In another side event on information and communication technologies that was jointly organised by Austria and UNESCO, Austria presented its efforts aimed at the protection of journalists.

8.3. Human Rights in the European Union

8.3.1. The European Union Human Rights Policy

Pursuant to Article 21 TEU, the objectives of the EU’s Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) include the development and consolidation of democracy and the rule of law as well as the protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms. Issues related to the EU’s human rights policy within the EU are dealt with by the EU Council Working Party on Fundamental Rights, Citizens Rights and Free Movement of Persons (FREMP). Issues related to the EU’s human rights policy towards third countries are addressed by the EU Council Working Party on Human Rights (COHOM), responsible for human rights issues in the EU’s external relations, in cooperation with geographical Council Working Parties. Austria continued its commitment towards better integration of human rights in all EU policy areas, especially with regard to effective coordination between COHOM and FREMP, in order to ensure a consistent EU human rights policy both inside and outside of the EU.

The implementation of the EU Human Rights Policy for the CFSP and the Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy, adopted by the EU External Relations Council in June 2012, was continued with a view to further strengthening the EU’s effectiveness and coherence as a global power for the promotion of human rights. The Policy and the Action Plan provide for the enhanced integration of human rights aspects into other EU policy areas such as trade and development cooperation. They also take account of measures towards strengthening the protection of journalists and towards the promotion and protection of freedom of religion or belief. Implementation of the Action Plan and of the measures provided for in the Action Plan was evaluated and building on the relevant results a new Action Plan is to be adopted in 2015.

In July, the mandate of the EU Special Representative for Human Rights, Stavros Lambrinidis, was extended until 28 February 2015. The EUSR continued his successful efforts for dialogue in the human rights area with the EU’s Strategic Partnership countries including Brazil, Mexico, the USA and countries in transition such as Egypt, Myanmar/Burma, Lebanon and Rwanda. In addition, the process of preparing country-specific human rights strategies for the EU’s external relations was almost fully completed.
Identifying eleven areas as priority, the EU Guidelines on Human Rights strive to enable players at EU level and EU Member States to support enhanced protection of human rights in a more coordinated and coherent manner with regard to third countries. Each of these Guidelines comprises a catalogue of measures for the EU’s permanent commitment to third countries on individual human rights issues such as the death penalty, torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, the protection and promotion of the rights of the child, human rights dialogues with third countries, the protection of children in armed conflict, the protection and promotion of human rights defenders, on combating violence against women, on international humanitarian law, on the human rights of LGBT persons, and on freedom of religion and belief. In June, the External Relations Council adopted the Guidelines on freedom of expression online and offline which, based on the initiative of Austria, also include measures for protecting the safety of journalists and privacy in digital media. Austria advocates the full implementation and further development of the guidelines.

The main responsibility for implementing concrete projects and programmes in the field of EU human rights policy lies with the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR). The work of the EIDHR is managed by the Committee on Democracy and Human Rights, which is headed by the European Commission. A concrete contribution to strengthening democracy globally is being made by the EU election monitoring missions, which have been conducted since 2000. A total of 19 Austrians have participated as short- and long-term observers in the eight missions to Afghanistan, Guinea Bissau, Egypt, Kosovo, Malawi, Maldives, Mozambique and Tunisia conducted in 2014. Austria has thus been very successful with its candidates and ranks fourth compared with other EU Member States.

Within the EU, the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union is binding when implementing EU law. The European Court of Justice (ECJ) examined the outcome of the negotiations, provisionally finalised in 2013, on the EU’s accession to the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) for conformity with EU law and published its findings December. On some items the ECJ found the draft accession treaty of the EU to the ECHR to be incompatible with EU law. For the time being the treaty can thus not be finalised.

The Vienna-based European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) provides advice to the European Commission, the Council, other organs of the Union and the Member States. It collects information on the fundamental rights situation in the entire EU and based on this information it provides recommendations for improving the situation. In 2014, the FRA focused in particular on the priorities of violence against women, migration and asylum and EU Internal Security Strategy. Other topics addressed included progress made in transposing the EU Directive on Victims’ Rights into national law and the use and application of the National Roma Integration Strategies.
In cooperation with the Italian EU Council Presidency, the FRA organised a fundamental rights conference on 10 and 11 November dedicated to the topic of fundamental rights and migration in the EU. Austria has cooperated closely with the FRA right from the beginning on and also advocates strengthening its mandate in the forthcoming evaluation negotiations on its founding regulation.

8.3.2. Structured Human Rights Dialogue

As outlined above, the EU uses special Guidelines on Human Rights Dialogues with third countries that define various forms of dialogue, namely structured human rights dialogues, ad hoc dialogues, dialogues with groups of states and expert meetings with like-minded states in preparation for major human rights events. The EU holds human rights dialogues with more than 40 states and groups of states. The respective topics, problematic issues and opportunities for discussion addressed during these dialogues are defined individually on a case by case basis. Topics that feature frequently in these talks are minority rights, women’s rights, the death penalty, freedom of religion or belief, democratisation, the rule of law, children’s rights and civil society development. The EU strives to actively involve civil society in these dialogues, for instance by organising joint preparatory meetings in the lead-up to the dialogues. The human rights dialogues are held on an alternating basis in the EU and in the respective partner country.

In 2014, EU human rights dialogues, consultations and subcommittee meetings were held with the candidate countries and with Armenia, Azerbaijan, Brazil, Chile, China, Georgia, Indonesia, Israel, Cambodia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Columbia, Laos, Lebanon, Morocco, Mexico, Moldova, Myanmar/Burma, Pakistan, the Palestinian Autonomy Authority, Peru, South Africa, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Ukraine and Uzbekistan. As the discussion climate during the human rights dialogues between the EU and the Russian Federation has increasingly deteriorated during the past few years, it was, as in previous years, not possible to reach agreement on holding a human rights dialogue.

The EU-China Human Rights Dialogue was held on 8 and 9 December in Brussels. Besides individual human rights cases, the EU inter alia addressed the situation of the Tibetan and the Uighur minority, the reform if the re-education camps, freedom of religion or belief, freedom of opinion online and offline, arbitrary arrests and the death penalty as well as the rule of law. One priority of the dialogue meeting were women’s rights and fighting violence against women, on which challenges were addressed and best practices shared.

The EU-Iran Human Rights Dialogue was established at the end of 2002 but came to a virtual standstill after its fourth round in June 2004. During Austria’s EU Council Presidency in 2006, efforts were undertaken to resume the
dialogue but remained unsuccessful due to the alarming human rights situation in Iran. Austria and the EU regard concrete improvements in the protection of human rights as well as agreement on measurable goals to be achieved in the context of such discussions as the prerequisite for a resumption of the EU-Iran Human Rights Dialogue.

8.4. Human Rights in the Council of Europe

The Council of Europe (CoE)’s human rights protection system is based on the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) and the legally binding effect of the decisions passed by the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR). Since the entry into force of Protocol 14 to the ECHR in 2010, the introduction of procedural improvements has enabled a significant reduction in the very high number of pending cases (more than 160,000). Between 1 January and 30 November the number of pending cases thus further declined from 99,900 to 71,600.

In 2014, the ECtHR dealt with a total of 18 cases pending against Austria; in 7 cases a judgment was delivered; in 4 cases the Court found a violation of the ECHR by Austria.

The Treaty of Lisbon provides for the EU’s accession to the ECHR. In addition to the existing possibilities of applying to the ECtHR, it will create the possibility to file an individual application directly against the EU in areas of EU competence. The agreement on this accession, which was provisionally finalised in April 2013, was submitted for review to the European Court of Justice (ECJ). In its opinion issued on 18 December the latter found that some items of the draft agreement on the accession of the EU to the ECHR are incompatible with Union law.

At the 124th Session of the CoE Committee of Ministers, held in Vienna on 6 May, Secretary General Thorbjørn Jagland presented his report on the status of human rights, democracy and the rule of law in Europe. Options for action resulting from that report relate inter alia to consolidation and closing of gaps with respect to the CoE’s monitoring activities (for instance in areas affected by frozen conflicts). He suggested holding a fourth CoE Summit dedicated to the topic of Democratic Security. Following consultations with the member states, the SG is to present a second report on Democratic Security at the 125th Session of the CoE Committee of Ministers to be held in Brussels on 19 May 2015.

The Ministers’ Deputies Committee (MDC) regularly deals with the full and worldwide abolition of the death penalty and adopted seven declarations on executions in the USA and Belarus. Armenia, Azerbaijan and the Russian Federation have from a formal legal point of view still not yet abolished the death penalty in all cases.
In the reporting year, the **Commissioner for Human Rights** of the CoE, Nils Muižnieks, visited Ukraine three times (including the Crimea during a visit in September), France, Georgia, Italy, Malta, the Netherlands, Montenegro, Romania, Russia and Hungary. His reports and statements on both country-specific and thematic developments contribute towards raising awareness of human rights in the member states.

The term of the Austrian judge at the **ECtHR**, Elisabeth Steiner, will end on 31 October 2015 and her successor will be elected by the Parliamentary Assembly in 2015. As a first step in the CoE’s selection process, the Austrian Federal Government submitted a proposal shortlisting three candidates in December.

**The Austrian members currently represented on the monitoring bodies** are thus Gerald Schöpfer (European Commission against Racism and Intolerance, ECRI), Julia Kozma (European Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment of Punishment, CPT), Helmut Sax (2nd President of the Group of Experts on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings, GRETA), Brigitta Busch (Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, FCNM), Dieter Halwachs (Committee of Experts of the European Charter for Regional and Minority Languages) and Karin Lukas (European Committee of Social Rights, ECSR).

### 8.5. Human Rights in the OSCE

See Chapter 4.2.4.

### 8.6. Austrian Priorities in the Field of Human Rights

#### 8.6.1. Freedom of Religion and Protection of Religious Minorities

In response to the global rise in violence and discrimination against religious minorities, Austria has stepped up its commitment to promoting religious freedom and the protection of religious minorities at bilateral and international level.

Austria has made this topic a priority of its membership in the **HRC** and regularly addressed the difficult situation of religious minorities in the country debates and in the context of the UPR of countries. This approach is also in keeping with the increasing focus being placed by the EU on this topic. The EU introduces one annual thematic **resolution on freedom of religion or belief (FoRB)** in both the UNGA and the HRC. Together with the resolutions introduced by the Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC), the topic of freedom of religion is receiving comprehensive coverage. At this year’s
69th UNGA, Austria also contributed a national statement to the Interactive Dialogue with Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion of Belief Heiner Bielefeldt.

The **resolution on the rights of minorities**, which has for many years now been a major concern of Austria in the context of the HRC, was again introduced in the 25th Regular Session in March. In the reporting year, the main emphasis was placed on the extension of the mandate of the HRC's Independent Expert on Minority Issues. Co-sponsored by a large number of states, the resolution was adopted by consensus and by changing the function of Independent Expert into that of a Special Rapporteur, it inter alia led to a strengthening of the expert mechanism in the UN system.

The **EU Guidelines on Freedom of Religion or Belief**, which are based on an Austrian initiative, were adopted by the Council in June 2013. By defining priority countries, the Guidelines were applied in practice. As a member of the Task Force on FoRB, established within the EU, Austria contributed actively to both implementation and application.

Austria furthermore contributes to a supra-regional Contact Group for Freedom of Religion or Belief (**FoRB Contact Group**), initiated by Canada, under which relevant information is exchanged and activities and projects in third countries are coordinated.

Austria also supports initiatives aimed at the protection of religious minorities and freedom of religion or belief in the context of the OSCE and of the CoE.

**8.6.2. Human Rights of Children**

The promotion and the protection of the rights of children are a priority of Austrian foreign policy. As was the case during its non-permanent membership of the UN Security Council 2009–2010, Austria again made the promotion of the rights of children and their protection against violence and exploitation a priority of its HRC membership 2011–2014. At the HRC meeting in September, for instance, Austria, together with a cross-regional group of states, introduced a resolution on combating child mortality. This resolution received huge support, was co-sponsored by more than 80 states and adopted by consensus. It calls upon states to consider the guidelines prepared by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (**OHCHR**) together with the WHO and to apply human rights principles in combating child mortality. During the HRC’s September session, Austria also organised a discussion event on the topic of “participation of children”.

Celebrating the 25th anniversary of the adoption of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child in 2014, Austria together with Switzerland, Liechtenstein and Slovenia organised a high-level discussion event during the HRC session in March in which Austria presented good practices towards protect-
ing children’s rights at national level. At the high-level meeting of the UNGA on the 25th anniversary of the adoption of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child in New York on 20th November 2014, Austria was represented by Federal Minister Sophie Karmasin. Federal Minister Wolfgang Brandstetter participated in the high-level Conference against Corporal Punishment of Children organised by Sweden in Stockholm on 3 and 4 June.

In May, Austria together with Thailand introduced as main sponsors a resolution on Model Strategies and Practical Measures on the Elimination of Violence against Children in the Field of Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice in the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice (CCPCJ) in Vienna, which was adopted with huge support by the community of states. These guidelines, which had been prepared in Bangkok in February by an intergovernmental working group, contained recommendations for players at state level on how to prevent and effectively counter violence against children that may result from their contact with the justice system. The guidelines are the result of Austrian efforts in the HRC, in the UNGA and in the CCPCJ and make an essential contribution to strengthening the rights of the child.

On two levels, the Austrian Development Cooperation (ADC) is also committed to supporting the rights of the child in a targeted manner. On the one hand, the ADC in all its activities – including political dialogue – takes special account of the needs and rights of children in the context of implementing the human rights approach. On the other hand, the ADC promotes projects and programmes that are specifically tailored towards strengthening and promoting the rights of children. The relevant activities are directed inter alia towards prevention of traditional violence against children in Uganda, school education for nomad children and young people in Ethiopia as well as Roma children in South East Europe, including children with disabilities, programmes aimed at strengthening families via NGO financing in Uganda, Ethiopia and Tanzania. In the context of the negotiations by the Open Working Group on the Post-2015 Development Agenda, Austria actively promoted greater consideration of the rights of the child.

Projects of the UN Children’s Fund (UNICEF) aimed at strengthening children’s rights are funded via multilateral development cooperation.

### 8.6.3. Human Rights of Women

Improving the human rights situation of women is a long-standing central concern of Austrian foreign policy. Austria participated actively in the 58th Session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women (see Chapter 8.2.3.) and in the open debates of the UNSC on the topic of women, peace and security as well as on conflict related violence (see Chapter 6.3.1.3.).

A delegation composed of representatives from the MFA and the Federal Ministry of Education and Research participated in a **Global Summit to End Sexual Violence in Conflict**, organised by the British government from 10 to 13 June in London and supported the Statement of Action proclaimed at this conference.

On 24 June, the candidate nominated by Austria for the **Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women** (CEDAW Committee), judge Lilian Hofmeister, was successfully elected to the committee for a period of four years (her membership will begin on 1 January 2015).

In the context of the negotiations in the **Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals** in New York, Austria strongly supported the inclusion of a separate goal on gender equality and women’s empowerment in the new Post-2015 Development Agenda as well as the consideration of gender aspects also in other sustainable goals.

In the Third Committee of the **69th Session of the UNGA** (see Chapter 8.2.2.) Austria participated in the negotiations on a range of resolutions aimed at strengthening women’s rights. Austria, for instance, actively supported and contributed to the negotiations on the (annual) initiative for a resolution sponsored by France and the Netherlands on **violence against women and girls**. This resolution, which focused on the topic of accountability, was also co-sponsored by Austria.

In the context of the sessions held by the **HRC** in June and September, Austria participated in the discussions on women’s rights, inter alia on the Post-2015 Development Agenda, female genital mutilation and ensuring a gender perspective in the HRC’s work. Furthermore, Austria organised a side event on human trafficking in June, which also dealt with the exploitation of women. Austria supported a number of relevant resolutions as co-sponsor in the HRC and contributed actively to negotiations. Under the HRC’s UPR, Austria regularly made recommendations on the equality of men and women, stronger political participation of women and putting an end to discrimination and violence against women (for instance on Afghanistan in January, on Albania in April, on Bolivia and Iran in October).

In the EU context, Austria participated in the meetings of the **EU Task Force on UNSC Resolution 1325** and contributed to the **EU Member States’ annual meeting on Resolution 1325** in Brussels in July, which focused on linking the Post-2015 Development Agenda with the topic of women, peace and security. Against the background of the resolution’s 15th anniversary in 2015, the meeting also undertook an evaluation of the current level of implementation of resolution 1325. In January, the Political and Security Committee of the
EU adopted the second report on the EU Indicators for a Comprehensive Approach to the EU Implementation of UNSC Resolutions 1325 (2000) and 1820 (2008) to which Austria had actively contributed. Austria also played an active role in the elaboration of the EU Council Resolutions on violence against women, which was adopted in June.

Under the Austrian chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers of the CoE, Austria, in cooperation with Turkey, launched a joint initiative aimed at enhancing the ratification standards and advancing the entry into force of the CoE Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention). After the entry into force of the convention in August, Austria advocated timely elaboration of election regulations for the group of experts (GREVIO) provided for under the Istanbul Convention, which were adopted on 19 November by the Ministers’ Deputies Committee (MDC).

Apart from its voluntary contribution to the core budget of UN Women, Austria also made a financial contribution to the Global Study on the implementation of UNSC resolution 1325 commissioned by the UNSG with a view to the 15th anniversary of the resolution’s adoption in October 2015. Furthermore, Austria co-funded a project in Brazil aimed at enhanced coordination of the judiciary in combating lethal violence against women. The MFA also made available a financial contribution to the revised second edition of the publication “Femicide: A Global Issue that Demands Action” published by the Vienna-based liaison office of the NGO Academic Council of the United Nations System (ACUNS).

In cooperation with the Federal Ministry of Defence and Sports, the Federal Ministry of Education and Research, the Federal Chancellery, ADA, the Office of the President of the Austrian National Council, the Bruno Kreisky Forum, the International Peace Institute (IPI), the Diplomatic Academy of Vienna and the National Committee for UN Women, the MFA organised an international symposium on “Enhancing Women’s Share in Peace and Security” in Vienna on 3 and 4 November, which dealt with the question of the implementation of UNSC resolution 1325. The symposium sought to make a substantive contribution to the Global Study on the implementation of UNSC resolution 1325, commissioned by the UNSG with a view to the 15th anniversary of the resolution’s adoption and to the global review of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action of 1995. Some 40 international experts discussed opportunities for enhanced implementation of the UN agenda “women, peace and security”. The findings generated by the symposium will be published in 2015 in a policy paper outlining 36 concrete recommendations to states, international organisations, civil society and the media and will be distributed to all UN member states as well as relevant international organisations.

Gender equality and empowerment of women as well as the protection of women’s rights are among the declared goals of the Austrian Development
Cooperation (ADC). Apart from taking special account of the needs and rights of women and men with respect to all activities (gender mainstreaming), specific projects and programmes aimed at strengthening the rights and the participation of women and girls were supported (including, for instance, the Gender, Peace and Security programme of the African Union (AU), aimed at supporting the development of effective mechanisms for the implementation of the latter’s action plans and measures aimed at promoting gender equality and strengthening the role of women in peace processes; support is also provided to projects aimed at preventing violence in Central America and strengthening women’s rights in Egypt, Nigeria and South Sudan). In the context of the fight against female genital mutilation, an awareness raising and health education project was (co-)funded in Ethiopia.

8.6.4. Freedom of the Media and Protection of Journalists

In view of the global rise in targeted attacks against journalists and the problem of widespread impunity, Austria made improving journalists’ safety and defending freedom of the press and the media a major concern of its HRC membership. Building on the first resolution on the safety of journalists, introduced by Austria and adopted with broad support from the international community in the HRC in September 2012, Austria also launched a number of activities in 2014 in order to better enshrine this very important issue in the HRC’s agenda and further develop its content.

The objective pursued was to consolidate the broad supra-regional coalition of states and civil society for the safety of journalists and to raise awareness for measures to be taken at national, regional and international level in order to create a safe working environment for journalists. In this spirit, Austria initiated a high-level panel discussion on good practices to ensure the safety of journalists, which was held at the HRC session in June and opened by UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Pillay. At the HRC’s September session, an Austrian resolution on the safety of journalists was adopted and supported by 91 states. This resolution focuses on fighting impunity for attacks and violence against journalists, and contains a list of concrete measures to be adopted by states to ensure accountability for crimes against journalists. Such measures include the development of specialised law enforcement units within the police forces and the public prosecutor’s offices, the establishment of databases as well as early warning and protection mechanisms for journalists. Co-funded by Austria, the UNESCO study “Violence and Harassment against Women in the News Media: A Global Picture” was presented in March at the HRC session in Geneva and to the UN Commission on the Status of Women in New York. The study is the first to provide a comprehensive picture of the specific threats journalists are exposed to worldwide.

In line with its mandate, UNESCO also took important steps towards improving the safety and security of journalists in 2014. The central instrument in
this respect is the Action Plan on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity, which was adopted in April 2012 and is currently being implemented in the pilot countries Iraq, Mexico, Nepal, Nigeria, Pakistan, South Sudan and Tunisia. On 4 November, the Third Interagency Meeting on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity was held in cooperation with UNESCO, the CoE and the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights in Strasbourg in which Austria and a number of civil society organisations participated. Deliberations focused on further concrete measures aimed at implementing the Action Plan.

Building on the results of the thematic debate by the Ministers’ Deputies Committee (MDC) initiated by the Austrian chairmanship in December 2013, the CoE adopted a recommendation on the safety of journalists in May. In March, an expert group on the safety of journalists and freedom of the internet began preparing practical measures for ensuring a safe working environment for journalists. Towards this end, a dedicated internet platform for the safety of journalists was set up. The underlying goal thus pursued is to establish a database in which relevant incidents reported by specific NGOs are entered.

Austria further stepped-up its efforts towards the protection of human rights on the internet. During the HRC’s September session a high-level panel discussion, initiated by Austria together with a core group (Brazil, Germany, Liechtenstein, Mexico, Norway and Switzerland), was held on the right to privacy in the digital age. The participating experts agreed that the existing human rights standards for the protection of privacy were sufficient whereas the effective adaptation of national legislation to technological development was lagging behind. It was also necessary to ensure the extraterritorial application of relevant human rights standards in order to enable the effective protection of human rights also on the Internet. At the 69th UNGA, a resolution on the right to privacy in the digital age was adopted by consensus. Austria co-sponsored the resolution and during the difficult negotiations it provided particularly active support to the two main sponsors Germany and Brazil. In spite of strong opposition by some states it was possible to substantially strengthen the resolution’s text, which also contains an invitation to the HRC to consider the establishment of the mandate of a Special Rapporteur on the Right to Privacy in the Digital Age.

Austria plays a leading role in the CoE with respect to the protection of human rights on the Internet. Building on the CoE’s Internet Governance Strategy, which was strongly supported by Austria and adopted in 2011, Austria – during its chairmanship of the CoE’s Committee of Ministers – hosted the international conference “Shaping the Digital Environment - Ensuring our Rights on the Internet” in Graz on 13 and 14 March. Discussions on the range of issues “Internet and human rights” focused on the primary goal of guaranteeing fundamental rights in the digital space. The central topics addressed were thus protection of privacy, the use of the Internet for the provision of
contents in the public interest as well as the responsibility of the economy/ICT industry for the respect of human rights on the Internet.

Austria participated on the fourth Freedom Online conference in Tallinn on 28 and 29 April. Austria is also a founding member of the Freedom Online Coalition (FOC), initiated by the Netherlands in December 2011. This informal group of interested states supports respect of human rights on the Internet worldwide and currently consists of 24 members (Austria, Canada, Czech Republic, Costa Rica, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Ghana, Ireland, Japan, Kenya, Lithuania, Latvia, Maldives, Mexico, Moldova, Mongolia, the Netherlands, Sweden, Tunisia, the United Kingdom and the USA).

8.6.5. Protection of Minorities

The protection of the rights of ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities has traditionally been an Austrian priority issue within the UN. Austria regularly introduces thematic resolutions on this topic both in the HRC and in the UNGA.

Austria supports the mandate of the Independent Expert on Minority Issues, which has been held by the Hungarian Rita Izsak since August 2011. Her priorities include the protection of religious minorities, recognition issues, minority protection in conflict prevention, women as members of minorities and minorities in the context of reaching the Millennium Development Goals. Based on a resolution that was successfully completed by Austria, again supported by numerous states and adopted at the 25th session of the HRC in March, it was possible to change the function of Independent Expert into that of Special Rapporteur, thus raising its standing and enshrining it more strongly in the entire UN system. Furthermore, this HRC resolution on minority issues was the first in which a reference to multiple, aggravating and intersectoral phenomena of discrimination (i.e. including also same sex minorities) was enshrined.

The **7th session of the UN Forum on Minority Issues** dealt with the topic of Preventing and Addressing Violence and Atrocity Crimes Targeted against Minorities. Co-initiated by Austria, this forum provides an important dialogue platform for reviewing the implementation of the Geneva UN Declaration on Minority Rights and focuses on involving government and NGO representatives from all around the world. The session succeeded in clearly highlighting the connection between the situation of minorities and the emergence of conflicts and adopted relevant recommendations to the HRC. Austria was again able to enhance its visibility as a supporter of this forum, thus expressing its commitment to promoting the issue of minorities within the UN context.

The resolutions on the protection of minorities that are initiated by Austria regularly include concrete recommendations by the Forum on Minority
Issues as instructions for action aimed at promoting the implementation of international obligations.

In the EU context, major importance is attached to the protection and integration of Roma. This is also underlined by the review of the implementation of the National Roma Integration Strategies by 2020. Austria works consistently on implementing its National Roma Integration Strategy and regularly reports to the European Commission on progress made. This is done by the National Contact Point at the Federal Chancellery, which inter alia also reviews the implementation of the national concepts for the inclusion of Roma in Austria. The Contact Point also organises regular meetings of the dialogue platform for Roma issues on the specific topics related to the inclusion of Roma.

Austria cooperates closely with the CoE monitoring mechanisms. The recommendations made to Austria in 2012 by the two committees – the Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities and the Committee of Experts of the European Charter for Regional and Minority Languages – serve as a blueprint for further strengthening the protection of minorities in Austria.

In 2013, Astrid Thors from Norway was appointed 4th High Commissioner on National Minorities of the OSCE. This function is another important element in the densely structured network for the protection of minorities at European level.

### 8.6.6. Human Rights Education

Human rights education aims to share knowledge and information on human rights and on developing an understanding of the importance of respecting, protecting and actively implementing human rights in one’s own community. Based on comprehensive and informed understanding, awareness of human rights shall thus be sustainably strengthened and implemented in society.

As a member of the UNESCO Executive Committee (2011–2015), Austria defined human rights education as a priority and was able to continue its commitment towards enshrining human rights and tolerance education in the international educational agenda. In this spirit, Austria organised a round table on Global Citizenship Education in Paris in May at which it also presented the brochure on education for tolerance “Spreading the Word” to representatives from more than 120 countries. Commissioned by the MFA, the brochure was prepared by the Graz-based European Training and Research Centre for Human Rights and Democracy (ETC). Representing Austria, an expert from the University of Klagenfurt subsequently contributed to preparing indicators for global human rights education in the context of the post-2015 education agenda.

As in previous years, Austria co-sponsored the resolution on a global human rights education programme, which was again adopted by consensus by all
states in the HRC. Together with this resolution, the HRC at the same time adopted an action plan for the third phase of the UN World Programme for Human Rights Education. The latter was proclaimed by the UNGA in 2004 in order to promote human rights education in all sectors. While the first and the second phase of the programme focused on human rights education in primary and secondary education as well as on human rights education at universities and training programmes for public officials (directed especially at teachers and members of the military and law enforcement bodies), the third phase of the World Programme (2015–2019) will focus on human rights education and further training for media professionals and journalists.

The “Understanding Human Rights” manual on human rights education, published by the ETC Graz, has enabled Austria to provide an important tool that is used towards this end worldwide. The manual has already been translated into 17 languages and is used successfully by numerous countries and regions in training and education programmes. Funded by the MFA, the translation into Arabic of the manual’s second updated and expanded version was published last year. The first Turkish version and the second edition in Albanian were also published last year.

8.6.7. International Humanitarian Law

See Chapter 9.4.

8.6.8. Combating Human Trafficking

Human trafficking is a particularly grave violation of the most fundamental human rights. According to estimates by the UN, several million people – mainly women and children – fall victim to human trafficking every year. According to UN estimates, profits of 32 billion US dollars are generated with the “human being as a commodity” every year. Alongside arms and drug trafficking, trafficking in human beings is one of the largest and most lucrative fields of organised cross-border crime worldwide.

Due to its geographical location at the centre of Europe Austria is affected by human trafficking both as a transit and a destination country. Experience has shown that human trafficking in Austria predominantly involves cases of sexual exploitation, labour exploitation and child trafficking.

Austria is a party to all relevant international legal instruments on combating human trafficking, including the “Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children Supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organised Crime” (2005) and the “Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings” (2006). The implementation of the CoE Convention by Austria is being evaluated by the independent expert group GRETA in
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2014/2015. Austria has continued its intensive cooperation with international organisations such as the Vienna-based UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and the UN Trust Fund for Victims of Trafficking in Persons (chaired by former Federal Minister Benita Ferrero-Waldner), the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and the International Organisation for Migration (IOM). The issue of combating human trafficking was also one of the priorities of the Austrian chairmanship of the CoE’s Committee of Ministers and the topic of a CoE-OSCE conference held from 17 to 18 February in Vienna.

On a national level, the relevant efforts are based on the National Action Plan on Combating Human Trafficking (currently 2012–2014) and were coordinated by the Task Force on Human Trafficking chaired by the National Coordinator on Combating Human Trafficking, Ambassador Elisabeth Tichy-Fisslberger, Director General of the Legal and Consular Section at the MFA. All public and government institutions, federal provinces and NGOs cooperate closely within the Task Force. On 3 June, a conference on combating human trafficking held in Linz was particularly dedicated to topics of special interest to the federal provinces. Social partner representatives were increasingly involved in the work of the Task Force, especially in the working group on “labour exploitation”.

In the field of prevention and/or awareness-raising, the MFA – on the occasion of the EU Anti-Trafficking Day 2014 – organised the annual public event on joining forces against human trafficking at the Vienna Diplomatic Academy on 10 October. The meeting focused on the topic of human trafficking for the purpose of labour exploitation. The exhibition “Human Trafficking – Slavery of the 21st Century” designed under the leadership of the MFA was presented during this event at the Diplomatic Academy, at an event on political education organised by the Federal Ministry for Education and Women’s Affairs and at the Open House event in the MFA.

All Austrian representations abroad, especially in high-risk countries, were encouraged to launch preventive measures against human trafficking, for example by distributing information brochures. Within the framework of the Austrian Development Cooperation (ADC), Austria assisted potential victims of human trafficking locally in the countries of origin, for instance, through projects implemented by IOM and UNODC in West Africa, South East Europe and Moldova.

In order to enhance the protection of domestic staff of diplomats or international officials accredited to Austria, the MFA, in cooperation with victim protection institutions, developed a wide range of control measures aimed at preventing potential abuse. Austria has assumed a leading role in these efforts at international level.
8.7. The International Criminal Court

The **International Criminal Court (ICC)**, based in The Hague, is a permanent international court established by the Rome Statute (RS) of 1998. Its jurisdiction currently includes genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes (under certain conditions also the crime of aggression as of 1 January 2017), provided that they were committed after the RS came into force on 1 July 2002, either on the territory of a State Party or by a national of a State Party. The UNSC may also refer a situation to the ICC, even if the states in question are not State Parties to the RS. The RS, to which 122 States are currently party (as of the end of 2014), stipulates that the ICC shall be based on the principle of complementarity. This means that the Court will only act if the affected states, which are responsible for trying the perpetrators, are either unwilling or unable to carry out the investigation or prosecution.

Currently, nine situations are pending with the ICC, inter alia: the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Uganda, Central African Republic, Darfur/Sudan (referral by UNSC resolution 1593 (2005)); Libya (referral by UNSC resolution 1970 (2011)), Côte d’Ivoire, Kenya and Mali. In some cases the ICC is conducting preliminary examinations.

On 7 March the Trial Chamber II found Germain Katanga, rebel leader in the DR of the Congo, guilty of crimes against humanity and war crimes. On 23 May he was sentenced to a total of 12 years of imprisonment. At the end of June, the Defence for Germain Katanga and the Office of the Prosecutor discontinued their appeals against the judgment, which means that it is the first judgement passed by the ICC to become final.

On 17 April 2014, the Government of Ukraine, which is not a State Party to the RS, lodged a declaration under Article 12(3) RS accepting the jurisdiction of the ICC over alleged crimes committed on its territory from 21 November 2013 to 22 February 2014.

On 23 June 2014, the ICC Prosecutor Fatou Bensouda announced the conclusion of the preliminary examination of the situation in the Republic of Korea initiated in December 2010 (regarding the sinking of a South Korean warship in March 2010 and the shelling of a South Korean island) due to insufficient evidence.

At the end of July, the Appeals Chamber unanimously confirmed the decision by Pre-Trial Chamber I declaring the case against Abdullah Al-Senussi, former head of the Libyan secret service, inadmissible before the ICC as it was currently subject to domestic proceedings. The admissibility of the ICC proceedings against Saif Al-Islam Gaddafi was, however confirmed by the Appeals Chamber on 21 May as there were doubts regarding fairness and observance of rule of law principles in the context of the Libyan proceedings. Libya was repeatedly reminded of its obligation to surrender Gaddafi to the Court in The Hague, but has – as yet – not heeded this call.
On 1 December 2014, the Appeals Chamber confirmed the verdict of 2012 declaring Thomas Lubanga Dyilo guilty and the decision sentencing him to 14 years of imprisonment, thus both decisions have become final. The appeal against the decision of 7 August 2012 on reparations for victims – the first of its kind – is however, still being dealt with.

On 5 December, ICC Prosecutor Bensouda filed a notice to withdraw charges against Kenyan President Uhuru Kenyatta due to insufficient evidence after the Prosecution’s request for further adjournment had been rejected by ICC Trial Chamber V on 3 December. This withdrawal does, however, not represent an obstacle to the filing of a new case subject to the provision of additional evidence. The proceedings against Vice President William Ruto and radio presenter Joshua Sang were continued.

One of the main items on the agenda of the 13th Session of the Assembly of States Parties of the RS held in New York from 8 to 17 December were the elections to the office of President of the Assembly and of six new judges. The Minister of Justice of Senegal, Sidiki Kaba, was elected first African President of the Assembly and the representatives of Uruguay and Italy were elected Vice Presidents. After 22 rounds, the candidates from the following countries were elected: Korea, Poland, Hungary, DR of the Congo, France and Germany. Furthermore, six members were elected to the Committee on Budget and Finance. Kenya’s demand for adding an item to the agenda entitled “Special Session to discuss the Conduct of the Court and the Office of the Prosecutor” was not fulfilled. As the charges against President Kenyatta (see above) had been withdrawn shortly before the opening of the assembly, the proposal was not even able to receive broad-based support from African states. Instead, Kenya was given the opportunity to voice its criticism of the ICC during the general debate. Austria participated actively in the consultations and delivered a statement during the general debate. Another plenary discussion was held on the topic of cooperation. On 17 December, the resolution on the ICC budget 2015, whose negotiations had been chaired by Austria, was adopted by consensus.

Austria is among the traditional supporters of the ICC. It was, for instance, the first State Party to sign an agreement with the ICC on the enforcement of sentences and holds discussions on an arrangement on victim protection. On 29 April, the amendments to the RS (crimes of aggression and addition of further war crimes), adopted in June 2010 by the RS Review Conference in Kampala (Uganda) were approved by the National Council. The ratification documents were deposited with the UNSG in New York on “International Justice Day” (on 17 July). In December, the National Council unanimously adopted an amendment to the Criminal Code by which Austrian criminal law is adapted to the crimes set out in the RS (by including, for instance, crimes against humanity and a catalogue of war crimes). The amendment will enter into force on 1 January 2015.
9. **Austrian Humanitarian Aid and Disaster Relief**

9.1. **Austrian Humanitarian Aid and Disaster Relief**

9.1.1. **Bilateral Humanitarian Aid**

Bilateral humanitarian aid provided by Austria is funded and overseen by the MFA and other federal ministries, including the Federal Ministry of the Interior, the Federal Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, Environment and Water Management, the Federal Ministry of Defence and Sports, the federal provinces, municipalities and other public institutions.

Bilateral humanitarian aid reacts to exceptional crisis situations mostly resulting from natural disasters or armed conflict. The most evident consequences of such extreme crisis situations are refugee flows and famine. Such crises included the heavy flooding in Bosnia and Herzegovina as well as in Serbia, and the aggravation of the conflicts in Iraq and the Gaza strip. In each case, 1 million euros were made available from the Foreign Disaster Relief Fund (FDRF) to help those in need. The Austrian Development Agency (ADA) provided medical emergency care packages. With logistical support from the Federal Ministry of Defence and Sports, these packages were shipped directly to the troubled regions. ADA also made available 300,000 euros for internally displaced persons and refugees in northern Iraq while assistance to victims of the flood disaster in Serbia and in Bosnia and Herzegovina was increased by 300,000 euros. In addition, the Federal Ministry of the Interior also provided benefits in kind to Iraq, Bosnia and Herzegovina as well as Serbia. The Federal Ministry of Defence and Sports provided food aid to Bosnia and Herzegovina (also see Chapters 9.1.1.1. and 9.1.2.1.). The ongoing conflict in Syria, which resulted in a further deterioration in the humanitarian situation of the Syrian civilian population with millions of internally displaced persons and refugees seeking shelter in neighbouring countries, continued to pose a huge humanitarian challenge. A total of 1.5 million euros was made available from the FDRF, by the ADA and the Federal Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, Environment and Water Management for the provision of food aid to internally displaced persons in Syria, and for refugee projects carried out by Austrian non-governmental institutions in Armenia, Jordan and Lebanon. Another priority was the internal conflict in Ukraine: FRDF and ADA funds amounting to 700,000 euros were used to support projects aimed at helping internally displaced persons. The fight against the Ebola epidemic ravaging in West Africa was supported by the MFA, the ADA and the Austrian Development Bank with funding of 2.77 million euros. These funds were used inter alia for medical treatment centres, awareness-raising activities directed at the local population and strengthening the healthcare system. The Federal Ministry of the Interior provided benefits in kind. A further 500,000 euros each were made available from the FRDF to provide humanitarian emergency aid in the face of the serious humanitarian crises in the Central African Republic and in South Sudan. The Federal Ministry
of Defence and Sports provided food aid to South Sudan totalling 340,000 euros.

In 2014, total bilateral humanitarian aid, including humanitarian aid for international disasters coordinated by the Federal Ministry of the Interior amounted to 15.34 million euros. Funds and assistance provided were channelled through international humanitarian organisations and Austrian NGOs. Emergency aid packages sent to northern Iraq, for instance, ensure basic healthcare provision for 100,000 people for three months.

9.1.1.1. International Disaster Relief

Austria also provided international disaster relief in response to requests for assistance under the EU mechanism and in direct coordination with the EC/Monitoring and Information Centre (MIC).

In the aftermath of the snow and ice chaos in Slovenia in February and March, Austria, via the Union mechanism, provided assistance to the Slovenian civil protection authorities and made available 39 electricity generators. In total, 424 firefighting forces from the Firefighters Associations of the provinces of Vienna, Lower Austria and Salzburg were deployed for almost four weeks. In the aftermath of civil unrest in Ukraine in February and March, Austria, with logistical support from the Austrian Red Cross, made available 1,940 packages containing a range of medication on a bilateral basis.

In response to the flooding in Bosnia and Herzegovina in May, Austria, again via the Union mechanism, provided pumps, electricity generators, gas fired heaters and the like, as well as a four boats with staff from the Lower Austrian Firefighters Association and the Austrian Water Rescue Services as well as three heavy duty pumps from the Lower Austrian Firefighters Association with 171 personnel. This was supplemented by a water treatment facility, a total of 79 personnel and 34 vehicles made available by the Federal Ministry of Defence and Sports. Via the Union mechanism, Austria provided seven boats with personnel made available by the Province Firefighters Associations of Upper Austria, Salzburg and Carinthia as well as a heavy duty pump module from the Salzburg Firefighters Association with a total of 108 personnel and 18 vehicles in order to alleviate the impacts of the flooding in Serbia in May. Following the landslide in Georgia in May, an Austrian EU expert was dispatched to work with the EU coordination team in Georgia. In the light of the escalation in the humanitarian situation in Iraq in August, Austria, again via the Union mechanism, made available 3,000 kitchen sets, 1,040 hygiene kits and 100 family tents, which were transported to Erbil with logistical support from the Austrian Red Cross. In response to the outbreak of the Ebola epidemic in West Africa in August and September, disaster relief in the form of 900 hygiene protection kits, 4,080 bottles of disinfectant and five vehicles was provided to Liberia, again via the Union mechanism. An Austrian EU expert also participated in an UNDAC mission in Ghana.
All these international disaster relief missions were organised by the Federal Ministry of the Interior as the body responsible for international disaster relief and National Crisis and Disaster Protection Management.

9.1.2. Multilateral Humanitarian Aid

9.1.2.1. Austrian Food Aid

The provision of food aid by Austria is generally based on Austria’s accession to the Food Assistance Convention, which replaced the previously applicable Food Aid Convention. Alongside the EU and 11 EU Member States, Australia, Canada, Japan, the Russian Federation, Switzerland and the USA are currently full members of the convention. By ratifying the convention at the beginning of 2013, Austria committed itself to providing annual food assistance to food-insecure third countries (2014: 1.5 million euros). Led by the Federal Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, Environment and Water Management, and in cooperation with the MFA and the ADA, FAO and/or UN Food Programme (WFP), relief projects by were supported in Syria, South Sudan, Chad, Tajikistan, Burkina Faso, Sudan and Bosnia and Herzegovina.

9.1.2.2. International Committee of the Red Cross and International Federation of the Red Cross and the Red Crescent Societies

The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) was active in more than 80 countries. Together with the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) and the national organisations, it made an important contribution towards alleviating humanitarian suffering. Austria supported the ICRC’s operational work in the field of provision of basic services to the people in the Central African Republic and in South Sudan. Austria also contributed to the ICRC’s headquarters budget and funds were made available to the ICRC for fighting the Ebola epidemics in West Africa and providing refugee aid in Iraq.

In January, Federal Minister Sebastian Kurz met the President of the ICRC, Peter Maurer, for working discussions in Vienna.

9.2. Humanitarian Aid in the Context of the United Nations

9.2.1. Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs

The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) is responsible for international coordination of humanitarian aid and emergency response, for the development of the UN’s humanitarian policies as well as for the advocacy of humanitarian issues with other UN depart
ments. In addition to its headquarters in New York and Geneva, OCHA operates a network of field offices and regional support offices. Only 5 per cent of OCHA’s financial requirements are covered by the regular UN budget, the rest is made up of voluntary payments by member states including Austria. Since 2010, Austria has been a member of the OCHA Donor Support Group, a forum made up of top donors to OCHA. Austria supported OCHA’s efforts through an untied contribution to the core budget.

9.2.2. Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) is one of the largest UN relief organisations operating on all continents. UNHCR is headed by the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, former Portuguese Prime Minister António Guterres, who was re-elected for a second term in 2010. In February, Federal President Heinz Fischer met the High Commissioner for a working discussion in Vienna.

Austria supported UNHCR with an untied contribution to the core budget and by funding UNHCR activities for internally displaced persons in northern Iraq and in Ukraine. Responding to a call by UNHCR, Austria decided to bring a total of 1,500 Syrian refugees directly from the region to Austria and grant humanitarian admission to these refugees. Under this humanitarian admission programme and in close cooperation with UNHCR more than 500 Syrian refugees thus already arrived in Austria by December.

9.2.3. The United Nations World Food Programme

The UN World Food Programme (WFP) is the UN’s largest humanitarian organisation. The Federal Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, Environment and Water Management provided assistance to people in need in South Sudan and in Chad as well as for refugees and internally displaced persons in Syria.

9.2.4. United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Middle East

As in previous years, Austria made core payments to the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA). In addition, the UNRWA also received funding from the FDRF for the provision of basic services to the people affected by the current conflict in the Gaza Strip. In addition, the ADA also provided financial assistance to the UNRWA healthcare programme.
9.2.5. The United Nations Central Emergency Response Fund

The reformed Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) was adopted by the UNGA in December 2005 and became operational in March 2006. In establishing the CERF, the UN implemented a key reform project in the humanitarian field. The CERF is a major improvement over the system of “flash appeals”, which were provided with funds by member states only after a disaster or crisis had struck. It is a standby fund which enables more timely and reliable humanitarian assistance to be provided to victims of natural disasters and armed conflicts.

9.3. Humanitarian Aid in the European Union Context

Austria contributed its share to humanitarian aid worldwide through the European Commission’s Humanitarian Aid Office (ECHO) whose budget amounted to some 1.35 billion euros. The largest portion of funds was used to provide aid for the humanitarian crises on the African continent and in Syria.

9.4. International Humanitarian Law

Issues related to International Humanitarian Law are regularly discussed within the Austrian National Commission for the Implementation of International Humanitarian Law chaired by the MFA and the Austrian Red Cross.

A priority issue dealt with in 2014 was strengthening compliance with international humanitarian law. This topic was also the central issue discussed at the Third Meeting of States that was convened on 30 June and 1 July in Geneva and at informal experts’ meetings held at the beginning of April and at the beginning of December also in Geneva. This initiative focuses on the implementation of a mandate that was granted to the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and Switzerland in 2011 by the International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent (IRRC) and which is also actively supported by Austria. The goal pursued under this initiative is regular meetings of states on compliance with international humanitarian law, the convention of which is planned to be adopted by the 32nd IRRC at the end of 2015.

Furthermore, experts’ meetings, to which Austria also contributed proactively, were held in Geneva and Montreux in January and October respectively, focusing on regulations on the treatment of persons detained in non-international armed conflict.

On 19 November, the Austrian Committee of the Red Cross organised a panel discussion on the topic of “150th anniversary of the 1864 Geneva Convention”. The Geneva Convention for the protection of wounded and sick sol-
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diers of armies in the battlefield was prepared in the aftermath of the Battle of Solferino and is regarded as a milestone of international humanitarian law, as it for the first time introduced provisions protecting certain groups of persons (especially health workers and aid workers). Although it was not one of initial signatories of the convention, Austria became a state party in the immediate aftermath of the battle of Königgrätz in 1866.

At a panel discussion held in the context of the Vienna Conference on the Humanitarian Impact of Nuclear Weapons (8 and 9 December), the issue of nuclear weapons was analysed from the perspective of international environmental and public health law as well as with regard to international humanitarian law.

On 17 December, Switzerland as depository of the IV Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Times of War convened a conference of High Contracting Parties to the Convention, as requested by Palestine in the aftermath of the Gaza conflict in summer. The final declaration adopted at the conference stressed the applicability of international humanitarian law which is to be fully and effectively respected by all parties to the conflict in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, including East Jerusalem.
10. Foreign Trade

10.1. Bilateral Foreign Trade Policy

10.1.1. Austrian Investment

Both Austrian investment abroad and foreign investment in Austria are of importance to the Austrian economy – the latter also due to its direct impact on the Austrian labour market.

In 2014, the EU15 (all EU Member States prior to the Eastern enlargement of the EU in 2004) were the most important target region for Austrian investment abroad with investment flows of 7.1 billion euros. Direct investments from Austria in Eastern Europe (without EU Member States) amounted to 617 million euros – a figure, which after a massive drop in the previous year (from 1.5 billion euros in 2012 to 649 million in 2013), remained largely unchanged. What is striking is that the countries of Central, Eastern and South East Europe are still playing a substantial, albeit no longer the dominant role in the internationalisation of the Austrian economy. After Austria had established itself as an important investor in Central, Eastern and South East Europe following the changes in 1989, Austrian investors have – for about a decade now – focused increasingly on other markets. As a consequence, the share of exports to the transformation countries has been declining since 2007. In 2014, only about one third of the Austrian FDI stocks were located in Central and Eastern European countries while in 2008 it had been just above 50 %.

In 2014, Africa was the most important region of origin for foreign direct investment in Austria, which was attributable to some individual major investments. From a country perspective, Luxembourg was the largest investor with a volume of 1.4 billion euros, followed by Germany (1.1 billion euros) and Russia (0.8 billion euros). In 2014, the most important non-European investor was Japan with investments totalling 383 million euros, followed by Canada (67 million euros) and India (14 million euros).

Of the 810,325 employees of foreign affiliates of Austrian investors, about two thirds are active in Central and Eastern Europe – the highest number in the Czech Republic (99,079) and Bulgaria (72,883) followed by Hungary, Poland, Russia and Slovakia (as of 2013). With a total of 103,508 staff, Austrian companies are rather less active outside of Europe. As of 2013, a total of 250,252 Austrians (equalling approximately 6 % of the total labour force) worked for foreign direct investment companies in Austria.

10.1.2. Investment Protection

The purpose of investment protection agreements is to create an investment-friendly climate by increasing legal security for companies that invest abroad. Since the 1950s, more than 3,400 BITs (Bilateral Investment Treaties)
have been concluded worldwide. The newly adopted UNCITRAL transparency rules (United Nations Commission on International Trade Law) are to be applied from 1 April on and provide among other things for the mandatory publication of all relevant procedural contents.

The EU holds responsibility for the conclusion of direct investment agreements. The individual Member States are, however, still able to conclude BITs – provided no such agreement has been and is being negotiated by the EU.

10.1.2.1. Investment Protection Agreements at EU Level

Investment protection chapters are to be negotiated with India, Japan and Vietnam.

Negotiations on a Free Trade Agreement between Canada and the European Commission were completed and need to be confirmed by the EU Member States and the EP. Negotiations on a Free Trade Agreement have also been completed with Singapore. The European Commission has, however, announced that it will submit the agreement to the European Court of Justice for a review of its legal nature. Both draft agreements, which also include investment protection provisions, are currently subject to legal scrubbing.

For further information on investment protection in the context of the Free Trade Agreement between the EU and the USA, please see Chapter 3.3.1.2.

10.1.2.2. Austrian Investment Protection Agreements

A total of 62 Austrian investment protection agreements are currently in effect. In the context of new negotiations, which now have to be approved by the EC, the MFA – in agreement with the Federal Ministry of Science, Research and Economy and the Austrian Economic Chamber – focused on potential future markets for Austrian companies in order to facilitate foreign investment based on respect of international human rights, labour and environmental standards as well as adherence to international anti-corruption standards. Negotiations with Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan are about to be completed; with respect to the BIT with China, an amendment was made necessary by a judgement by the European Court of Justice.

In the first case so far, a claim was lodged in December by Beleggingsmaatschappij Far East B.V. against the Republic of Austria based on the BIT between Austria and Malta.
10.2. Multilateral Foreign Economic Policy

10.2.1. WTO

The main focus of multilateral trade policy was on pressing ahead with implementation of the results generated by the 9th WTO Ministerial Conference (MC9) held in Bali in December 2013. This included in particular a new trade facilitation agreement, elements from the negotiations on agriculture (food security, import quota management and export competition), and flexibilities for developing countries (special and differential treatment). Work initially focused on the Trade Facilitation Agreement as the deadline defined in Bali for its final adoption was the end of July. But as relevant efforts were blocked by India in July, stating very generally that efforts towards reaching a solution to the food security issue had been neglected, the deadline expired without agreement being reached.

Just ahead of the G20 Summit in Brisbane in mid-November, it was eventually possible to agree on a common basis and formally adopt the agreement. It is now being ratified at national level; the agreement enters into force as soon as two thirds of WTO member states have deposited the ratification instruments with the WTO. As regards the Indian priority of food security, it was agreed to also seek a permanent solution by the end of 2015.

As a consequence of the difficulties outlined above, further content-based work was suspended. The new deadline for the preparation of a post-Bali agenda is July 2015. The 10th Ministerial Conference (MC10) is to take place in Nairobi (Kenya) in December 2015.

The WTO welcomed two new members: Yemen joined the WTO in early spring; the decision on the accession of the Seychelles was taken in December, raising the organisation’s membership to 161 countries. Kazakhstan and Afghanistan are considered likely to obtain membership in 2015.

The 5th Aid for Trade Global Review is scheduled for summer 2015. This event is intended to drive the Aid for Trade Initiative, which serves as a platform for trade-related development assistance. This forthcoming meeting will focus in particular on trade costs. In December, the most important trade related assistance programme for the least developed countries, the Enhanced Integrated Framework (EIF), was already extended for another five years until 2020.

10.2.2. Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD)

10.2.2.1. Developments and general Trends

Discussions at the annual Ministerial Council meeting in May focused on “Resilient Economies and Inclusive Societies”. It was the first meeting
after the onset of the crisis where forecasts gave a more optimistic outlook. Prospects were, however, subdued by increasing political tensions, the deflation risk in the euro area and increasing credit growth in the emerging countries. Another topic addressed at the meeting was the growing inequality within societies.

Federal Minister Rudolf Hundstorfer represented Austria at the Ministerial Council meeting. In his contribution he focused on the important role the welfare state plays in mitigating social risks. The measures launched by Austria in order to promote youth employment (“Youth Guarantee”) were discussed and highlighted as examples of best practice.

10.2.2.2. Economic and Financial Policy
In 2014, Catherine Mann (USA) succeeded Pier Carlo Padoan, now Italian Minister of Finance, as OECD Chief Economist.

In its economic outlook, the OECD assessed the Eurozone and geopolitical tensions as risks and warned against secular stagnation, especially in the Eurozone.

As a consequence of the OECD’s re-orientation, wage, distribution and environmental policy aspects have come to play a more prominent role, and are dealt with inter alia in the context of the New Approaches to Economic Challenges (NAEC) project but also in the country reports (well-being, green growth and distribution-related issues). These developments are also supported by Austria.

With regard to the financial markets, efforts continued towards the introduction of a fixed equity ratio in relation to the (non-weighted) assets as well as the separation of classical, commercial banking from investment banking. Other major items on the agenda were work on SME financing, on implicit government guarantees for banks and long-term investment financing.

10.2.2.3. International Tax Policy
In the tax sector, the BEPS project (Base Erosion Profit Sharing) and the Automatic Exchange of Information (AEOI) on financial account data were the key elements of OECD activities.

In line with the BEPS Action Plan of 2013, the development of a framework aimed at the prevention of tax avoidance by multi-national groups was stepped up. At the Brisbane Summit in November the G20 adopted the first measures for inter alia improving transfer price regulation and documentation for country-by-country reporting. Work on BEPS is scheduled, with greater involvement of the developing countries, to be terminated by the end of 2015.

The AEOI was adopted as global standard for international data exchange; it largely takes its bearings on the USA’s Foreign Account Tax Compliance Act
Multilateral Foreign Economic Policy

Austria has committed itself to implement the AEOI from 2018 onwards; subject to technical feasibility, the automatic exchange of information could also start sooner. Austria ratified the Multilateral Convention on Mutual Administrative Assistance in Tax Matters, which inter alia provides a framework for the exchange of information, simultaneous tax audits and support in levying taxes.

10.2.2.4. Education and Skills

Work in the field of education and skills constitutes one of the core elements of OECD activity. Based on OECD data, international benchmarks on the impact of education are prepared (Programme for International Student Assessment, PISA), which also provide insights into the funding of education systems, equal opportunities in terms of access to education, the impact of education on the various sectors of society and participation in society.

The OECD increasingly analyses the link between education systems and labour markets. In Austria, for instance, a comprehensive survey was prepared on key competencies of adults (PIAAC, Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies). A special skills strategy that analyses the strengths and weaknesses of the Austrian system was also published.

10.2.2.5. Trade and Investment

The central topic in the area of trade was work on a value-added-based measurement of trade flows, which will contribute to better analysis of the increasingly important global value chains.

The OECD also continued work on export restrictions for raw materials, on competition neutrality, state owned enterprises in international markets and trade in services. The OECD’s most important project in this field is the development of a Services Trade Restrictiveness Index, which is to enable a comparative analysis of trade barriers based on a detailed list of relevant national regulation at sector level. An initial official presentation of selected data is scheduled for the OECD Ministerial Council in 2015.

In the field of investment, special attention is to be drawn to the process towards updating the Policy Framework on Investment (PFI), which is to be completed in the first quarter of 2015 and be officially adopted at the 2015 Ministerial Council.

10.2.2.6. Labour, Social Affairs and Consumer Protection

Against the background of consistently high levels of unemployment due to the crisis in the entire OECD area, the focus must remain on vulnerable
groups, such as young people and long-term unemployed, but also on persons with mental disabilities and their inclusion in the labour market.

In the field of pensions (Pensions Outlook 2014), the OECD identified raising the actual retirement age as a central challenge. Positive mention was made of the successful introduction of the pension account in Austria.

At the policy forum on the topic of migration in December, the focus was placed on the recent developments in the field of labour migration: measures aimed at benefiting from the potential offered by migrants (recognition systems) are to be expanded. The OECD also conducted an analysis of the Austrian labour migration system (“Rot-Weiß-Rot” Card) and suggested improvements with a view to enhancing the efficiency of the system that was first introduced in 2011.

In the light of the ongoing crisis, several analyses pointed to the interrelation between increasing inequality and stagnating economic growth. Especially the lower middle class has recently been identified as a particularly vulnerable group. The OECD’s recommendations thus focus on promoting growth while at the same time combating inequalities and poverty. Apart from calling for social transfer services they also focus on increasing participation in public services and improving education opportunities.

In the field of consumer protection, efforts focused on the revision of the OECD Guidelines on E-Commerce on whose fundamental structure broad agreement was reached.

10.2.2.7. Responsible Business Conduct

The OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises include recommendations for responsible business conduct in a global environment relating to fundamental commitments, information policy, human rights, employment policy, environmental protection, the fight against corruption, consumer interests, science and technology as well as competition and taxation.

The Austrian National Contact Point (NCP) is based at the Federal Ministry of Science, Research and Economy. The MFA is a member of the steering committee. Any natural person or organisation may report a violation of a company against the OECD guidelines by filing an individual complaint with the competent NCP. The MFA, furthermore, forwarded the Guidelines to all Austrian representations abroad requesting the latter to disseminate them in their respective jurisdictions, raise awareness of the Guidelines and to report any violation.

10.2.2.8. Agriculture and Environment

The development of long-term scenarios for agriculture and food were continued. The resulting options for more resilient policies are to be integrated in the above-mentioned NAEC project. Priorities of work included the imple-
mentation of the Revised General Service Support Estimates, global food security and improvement of sustainable agricultural productivity growth.

As already pointed out, environmental aspects play an important role in the context of the increasingly horizontal and multi-disciplinary approaches taken by the OECD. In this context, attention should be drawn to the project CIRCLE (Cost of Inaction and Resource Scarcity) and work on Green Growth.

10.2.2.9. Global Relations

The OECD strives to focus its global reach increasingly on Asia. The adoption of the Southeast Asia Regional Programme by Ministerial Council resolution laid the groundwork for more systematic cooperation.

Work on the accession of Columbia and Latvia was continued and action plans were elaborated with Costa Rica and Lithuania. Against the background of the current political situation, accession negotiations with Russia, which have been ongoing for years, were suspended until further notice. Specific country programmes for structured cooperation with Kazakhstan and Peru were also adopted.

10.2.2.10. Statistics

Alongside traditional data collection activities, work on well-being was continued and work on the development of an indicator for inclusive growth was started. The database on the measurement of trade in value added given as additional information to the traditional export and import data (Trade in Value Added - TiVA) was also updated and expanded.

10.2.3. International Energy Agency (IEA)

In November, the World Energy Outlook (WEO) was published. This report, which is prepared annually by the IEA, serves as the authoritative source of information for strategic analyses of the energy markets. This year, for the first time, it contains forecasts up to the year 2040.

The energy mix expected for the year 2040 will consist of equal shares of oil, gas, coal and low-carbon sources (i.e. renewable energies and nuclear energy). As regards energy costs, the outlook forecasts – with oil prices remaining low – a widening of the gap between the USA and European industrial countries.

Demand for crude oil and natural gas will rise substantially and will in the next decade be covered increasingly by the USA. Later, however, the Middle East will again assume a dominant role in the oil sector.

In contrast to coal, low-carbon energy sources will increase their market share. While the number of nuclear power plants is decreasing in Europe, it will rise again in Japan, the USA, Russia and most of all in China. Further-
more, more than 50% of demand for electricity will be covered by renewable energies by 2040.

If current trends continue, the global temperature will rise by 3.6 degrees Celsius instead of the originally projected 2 degrees Celsius by 2100. As Europe is only responsible for 15% of the global greenhouse gas emissions (taken together, China and the USA account for roughly 45%), the EU target alone will not suffice to prevent this development.

The IEA furthermore published a report on the in-depth review of Austrian energy policy, which confirms Austria’s balanced energy policy.

10.2.4. International Financial Institutions

10.2.4.1. International Monetary Fund (IMF)

An important aspect of the IMF’s work is crisis prevention by monitoring its Member States’ national economies under the Article IV Consultations which foresee annual talks. Under the Article IV Consultations, the IMF stated that Austria has managed the global economic and financial crisis well. Nevertheless, implementation of structural reform must not be neglected (in particular with regard to the reduction of government debt and lower taxes on labour). A reform of government spending as well as a reform of fiscal federalism could create the necessary leeway for implementing the projects.

In the banking sector, the restructuring of nationalised banks must be completed and the framework of the European Banking Union implemented as soon as possible. The large internationally active banks are to be prepared for capital increases.

10.2.4.2. Multilateral Development Banks

In 2014, the activities of Multilateral Development Banks (MDBs), i.e. especially the World Bank Group, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD), the European Investment Bank (EIB), the Inter-American Development Bank (IADB) and the Asian Development Bank (AsDB), were again dominated by the fight against global poverty. These efforts were, however, impeded on the one hand by the ramifications of the crisis and slowing growth in the major industrial and emerging economies and on the other hand by the increasing challenges related to climate change. Furthermore, the Ebola epidemic in West Africa, the political and economic situation in North Africa and in parts of the Middle East and Ukraine posed special challenges for the MDBs.

During the financial and economic crisis from 2008 onwards, the MDBs had already played an important anti-cyclical role in fighting the crisis and quickly increased their lending volumes significantly. For this reason, capital increases (of between 50% and 200%) were approved in 2010 by their
shareholders, i.e. the international community of states, in which Austria also participated. Payment of these capital increases was further implemented through the disbursement of the respective instalments (tranches). In terms of both fighting the crisis and reaching the Millennium Development Goals, the MDBs “soft” (i.e. concessional) funds for the poorest development countries play an especially important role as they make favourable long-term financing with significant grant elements available to these countries.

In order to promote economic and social development in Eastern and South East Europe, Austria supported technical assistance (TA) programmes in this region, such as the Financial Sector Advisory Programme launched by the World Bank or the co-financing of the EBRD Municipal Environment & Infrastructure TA Programme and the EIB Eastern Partnership TA Programme.

The expansion of the EBRD’s operational range to the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean was further implemented. The EBRD founding member Egypt had to continue the wait to be granted the requested “country of operation” status, Libya and Lebanon are currently being examined. Major challenges result from the developments in Ukraine and in Russia, where a large share of the ERBD portfolio is based.

Work on a number of measures towards modernisation and reform of MDBs was continued. They relate in particular to the banks’ strategic orientation, the reform of their governance structures, measures aimed at strengthening these institutions’ financial power as well as a stronger focus on monitoring results and/or performance. A profound reform process is currently being driven forward by the World Bank, which is looking to reduce the number of people living in absolute poverty to 3 % of the global population by 2030 and to promote specifically the bottom 40 % of the income pyramid in the developing countries through inclusive and sustainable growth (“shared prosperity”).

In the AsDB, the pooling of the assets of the Asian Development Fund and the bank’s capital resources were prepared. Without generating any costs for the donor countries, this will lead to a tripling of the bank’s capital and a clear expansion of its funding capabilities. The relevant decisions are to be adopted by its governors in 2015.

The IADB is seeking to merge the Inter-American Investment Corporation, which is part of the IADB Group, with other IADB programmes in order to stimulate the private sector. These restructuring measures will be submitted for decision-taking to the bank’s governors in 2015.
11. **Global Disarmament, Arms Control and Non-Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction and their Means of Delivery**

11.1. **Introduction**

Disarmament and non-proliferation of nuclear, chemical and biological weapons of mass destruction as well as arms control are central objectives pursued by international security policy. Austria, which plays a leading and most pro-active role in this context, places its main focus on the humanitarian dimension and the protection, safety and security of each individual citizen.

Austria plays a pioneering role in the context of multilateral nuclear disarmament initiatives and will continue to specifically advocate a ban on nuclear weapons in all multilateral bodies. Austria’s active role in the field of multilateral disarmament was clearly illustrated by the Vienna Conference on the Humanitarian Impact of Nuclear Weapons (8 and 9 December). Attended by 900 experts representing a wide range of different institutions from 158 states, it set an international benchmark on the way towards a world free of nuclear weapons.

With respect to chemical weapons and the developments in Syria, Austria supported the destruction of Syria’s chemical weapons arsenal, inter alia by providing relevant expertise.

Alongside disarmament of weapons of mass destruction, conventional arms control was another key topic on the agenda. The entry into force of the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) on 24 December marked an important step towards enhanced arms control. As the treaty provides for the establishment of a Secretariat, Austria being a centre for disarmament, offered to host the ATT Secretariat in Vienna.

11.2. **Arms Control and Disarmament in the Field of Weapons of Mass Destruction**

11.2.1. **Initiatives for the Worldwide Elimination of Nuclear Weapons**

Nuclear disarmament and prevention of the proliferation of nuclear weapons and eventually a world without weapons of mass destruction are a priority of Austria’s foreign and security policy. Austria holds the view that the proliferation of nuclear weapons can only be prevented by banning and renouncing such weapons. Highlight of the multilateral initiatives launched by Austria so far was the successful **Vienna Conference on the Humanitarian Impact of Nuclear Weapons** (Hofburg, 8 and 9 December; see www.HINW14vienna.at).
Some 900 experts from 158 states, international organisations, the Red Cross and the Red Crescent Societies as well as non-governmental organisations discussed the complex impact of nuclear weapons on health, the environment, climate, the economy and society as well as the host of risks associated with nuclear explosions and the relevant legal situation. A message from Pope Francis underlined the moral-ethical dimension associated with the issue of nuclear weapons. In the conclusions adopted by the conference, Austria underlined that the impact and risks associated with a nuclear weapons explosion were much higher than previously assumed and that there were, moreover, no capacities for adequate humanitarian assistance available in the event of a nuclear explosion. Austria committed itself in a national pledge to vigorously pursue its efforts towards nuclear disarmament. It furthermore underlined its commitment to cooperate with like-minded states, international organisations and civil society partners, especially in light of the 2015 NPT Review Conference with a view to stigmatising, banning and eliminating nuclear weapons.

11.2.2. Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons

Since it entered into force in 1970, the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) has formed the legal basis of the international nuclear regime whilst serving as one of the cornerstones of nuclear non-proliferation. The treaty obligates its 189 states parties to renounce nuclear weapons and at the same time provides for the peaceful use of nuclear energy. The five nuclear weapons states recognised in the treaty – China, France, the UK, Russia and the USA – for their part, commit themselves to nuclear disarmament and the goal of complete elimination of nuclear weapons. India, Israel and Pakistan are the only states not to have joined the NPT, while the Democratic People’s Republic of North Korea unilaterally declared its withdrawal from the NPT in 2003. The state parties meet every five years for a review conference in order to evaluate the implementation status of the NPT. Following the adoption of an action plan at the 2010 Review Conference, the focus is now being placed on its implementation. Due to lack of agreement among the states involved, the expectations regarding the organisation of the planned Helsinki Conference on the sensitive topic of a zone free of nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East have not yet been met. Slow progress made by nuclear weapons states in putting disarmament commitments into practice and lack of observation of non-proliferation obligations also represent major challenges for the NPT.

Chaired by Peru, the third Preparatory Committee Meeting of the Review Cycle was held in New York in April and May. In its contributions, Austria inter alia highlighted the importance of disarmament and the humanitarian dimension of nuclear weapons and education.
11.2.3. Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty

The Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) provides for a comprehensive ban on all nuclear explosions. Since the adoption of its draft by the UNGA in 1996, the CTBT has been signed by 183 states and ratified by 163. Thanks to its international monitoring system the CTBT will, following its entry into force, make the secret development of deployable nuclear weapons impossible. However, as to date not all of the key States listed in Annex 2 (Egypt, China, India, Iran, Israel, North Korea, Pakistan and the USA) have ratified it, the CTBT has as yet not entered into force. The CTBT Preparatory Commission has in the meantime made considerable progress in setting up the verification system whose worldwide network of monitoring stations is 85% complete and largely operational. The monitoring system consists of high-tech facilities for seismic, hydro-acoustics, infrasound and radionuclide measurements. It is already in use today for civilian applications, such as Tsunami early warning services and radiological measurements following the nuclear power plant disaster in Fukushima (Japan). The monitoring system is supplemented by the contractually guaranteed inspection opportunity. In November and December the most recent inspection exercise took place in Jordan.

11.2.4. Geneva Conference on Disarmament

Set up in 1979, the Geneva Conference on Disarmament (CD) is the multilateral forum established by the UN for negotiating disarmament agreements and treaties. Again in 2014, the 65 Member States did, however, not succeed in overcoming the political and content-related differences of opinion on disarmament issues and the resulting blockade of substantial negotiations that has now been ongoing for some 18 years.

11.2.5. Chemical Weapons Convention

The Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC), which entered into force in 1997, introduced a ban on all chemical weapons and stipulates their phased destruction. With 190 states parties, the Convention has now come close to reaching its stated objective of having universal validity (the UN member states that are still outside of the convention are Angola, Egypt, Israel, North Korea, South Sudan and Myanmar, the latter is, however, expected to join soon). Three states parties, the USA, Russia and Libya, have not yet fully destroyed their chemical weapons arsenals.

This year was marked by the destruction of the chemical weapons arsenal of Syria, which was largely completed in the course of the year. Austria supported the relevant efforts by seconding one expert to the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) and by providing air transport capacities. The implementation of a plan for the destruction of twelve former
chemical weapons production facilities in Syria is expected for 2015. There are, however, ongoing differences of opinion between the states parties to the Convention, especially with respect to the completeness and accuracy of the declarations made by Syria regarding its chemical weapons programme and the responsibility for a number of incidents in the Syrian civil war involving the suspected use of chlorine.

### 11.2.6. Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention

Signed in 1972, the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BWC) prohibits the development, production and stockpiling of biological and toxin weapons. Currently, 171 countries are states parties to the BWC, of which 155 have ratified and 16 signed the Convention. In the annual Experts Meetings and Meetings of States Parties, deliberations focus on the development of measures aimed at enhancing biosafety, monitoring, training and exchange of experience. In Austria, a seminar on natural and man-made biological threats entitled “Biologische Bedrohungen: Gefahren aus Natur und Retorte” (biological threats: threats from nature and the retort) including the accompanying publication, which was organised by the “ABC Abwehrschule des Bundesheeres” (NBC defence school of the Austrian Federal Army) and supported in terms of content by the MFA, contributed to awareness-raising. In contrast to the Chemical Weapons Convention, the BWC is not equipped with a verification system. Negotiations towards setting up such a system failed in 2001 and have not since been resumed.

### 11.2.7. Ballistic Missiles

Apart from the Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR), the Hague Code of Conduct (HCoC) is the only instrument dealing with the non-proliferation of ballistic missiles. Chaired by Peru, the HCoC convened its 13th Regular Meeting of Subscribing States in Vienna from 29 to 30 May. Since 2002, Austria has held the function of Immediate Central Contact (Executive Secretariat), thus acting as the interface for the entire exchange of information in the context of the HCoC mechanism. There are currently 137 subscribing states to The Hague Code of Conduct, which receives substantial support from the EU.

### 11.3. Arms Control and Disarmament in the Field of Conventional Weapons

Protection of civilians in armed conflict remains a long-standing thematic priority of Austrian foreign policy. The committed course Austria has pursued for many years now in fighting anti-personnel mines and cluster muni-
tions is a very important humanitarian contribution in this respect as these weapons indeed pose an acute risk to civilians and claim innumerable lives even decades after fighting has stopped. The Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on their Destruction (Ottawa Convention) entered into force in 1999. Currently, 162 countries are states parties to the convention. The Ottawa Convention’s success is reflected in the fact that fifteen years after its entry into force, both use and production of anti-personnel mines have clearly declined while trade has virtually been brought to a halt. Major stockpiles have been destroyed and large contaminated areas have been cleared of mines. The Third Review Conference of the Ottawa Convention was held in Maputo (Mozambique) from 23 to 27 June. As Vice-President and Co-Chair on assistance to survivors, Austria, which is one of the leading countries of the Ottawa Process and especially committed to the ban on the use, stockpiling, production and transfer of anti-personnel mines as well as their destruction, was able to play an important role at this conference. The states parties agreed on the goal of a world free of mines by 2025. The Maputo Action Plan thus includes a number of concrete measures to enable this goal. Within the context of the Review Conference, Austria organised a training event for Mozambique journalists, a cultural event involving survivors and a side-event on removing barriers to accessibility.

The Convention on Cluster Munitions (Oslo Convention) entered into force in 2010. By the end of the year 2014, a total of 89 states out of 116 signatories had ratified the Oslo Convention. The Convention makes an essential contribution to the further development of international law. It provides for a categorical prohibition of the use, development, production, stockpiling and transfer of cluster munitions, which cause unacceptable harm and suffering to civilians. In the field of assistance to survivors, the convention – not least due to Austria’s committed efforts – sets forward-looking standards. With the active participation of civil society representatives, the Fifth Conference of the States Party to the Oslo Convention was held in San José (Costa Rica) from 2 to 5 September.

In recent armed conflicts, the use of explosive devices in densely populated areas has claimed an increasingly higher death toll, mainly among the civilian population. In line with its comprehensive commitment for the protection of civilians in armed conflict, Austria supports the calls by the UN Secretary General for putting an end to this practice, which violates international law. This issue was also addressed on 22 October in a side event chaired by Austria on the margins of the First Committee of the 69th UNGA.

11.3.1. Latest Developments in Arms Technology

Based on a mandate granted by the Meeting of High Contracting Parties to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons in 2013, an international
Meeting of Experts on Lethal Autonomous Weapon Systems was convened in Geneva from 13 to 16 May. The position presented by Austria was that especially the use of lethal weapons systems must always remain subject to meaningful human control. Austria stressed that this was the only way to observe the fine lines drawn by ethics and humanitarian international law with regard to conflict-related violence. In this context it also called on all those currently engaged in this area to voluntarily refrain from the development of such new weapons technology, whose impacts are as yet not sufficiently understood.

11.4. Export Control Regimes

11.4.1. Multilateral Export Control

The objective of the current five control regimes is to prevent – through the coordination of national export controls – sensitive technology and know-how from falling into the hands of states that could use them for military purposes. The main instruments under these regimes are lists of relevant goods and substances as well as guidelines governing exports to non-Member States. Austria is a member of all five regimes. The national implementation of these instruments is largely covered by the Foreign Trade Act of 2011 (previously the Foreign Trade Act of 2005).

The relevant regimes in the nuclear context are the Vienna-based Zangger Committee (ZC), which comprises 38 members and the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG) whose membership is – following the accession of Mexico and Serbia – currently made up of 48 participating governments. The ZC and the NSG draw up and maintain control lists of sensitive nuclear goods and equipment, seeking to prevent uranium enrichment and plutonium processing activities for non-peaceful purposes. The NSG plenary session was held in Buenos Aires on 26 and 27 June. The Australia Group (AG), which currently comprises 42 members, endeavours to ensure, by means of export controls, that certain products will not contribute to the development of chemical and biological weapons.

The Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR) currently has 34 members (partners) who have committed themselves to adhering to guidelines governing the controlled proliferation of nuclear-weapons-capable rocket and missile technology (missiles with guidance systems and cruise missiles).

Founded in 1996, the Wassenaar Arrangement (WA), which comprises 41 participating states, aims to prevent destabilising accumulations of conventional weapons and dual-use goods and technologies by coordinating national export controls and enhancing transparency and accountability. The Vienna-based Secretariat is headed by Ambassador Philip Griffiths (New Zealand). Vienna was also the venue of the annual meeting of participating states from 3 to 4 December.
11.4.2. Arms Trade Treaty (ATT)

The text of the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) which defines rules for international trade in conventional weapons was adopted by the UNGA by an overwhelming majority in 2013. Austria, which supported a robust ATT, was among the first states to sign the treaty on 3 June at a ceremony in New York. In the meantime, the ATT has been signed by 130 states of which 61 have ratified it. Thus the ATT entered into force on 24 December (90 days after the 50th ratification instrument was deposited). The First Conference of States Parties to the ATT will be organised by Mexico in mid-2015.

The ATT for the first time defines international standards for the transfer of conventional arms thus contributing to fighting and/or limiting the negative impact of illicit and irresponsible arms trade on stability, security and human rights as well as on sustainable economic and development policy. Arms exports are, for instance, banned if they could be used to commit serious violations of international humanitarian law and human rights; and in decisions on the export of arms, criteria such as their impact on peace and security, the risk of illicit transfer and trafficking (including exchange of information on corruption) or gender-based violence are to be taken into account. The ATT does not, however, contain a ban on weapons or an obligation to destroy existing weapons. The right to individual or collective self-defence as defined under Art. 51 of the UN Charter remains untouched by the treaty.

Austria successfully advocated ensuring that the international Arms Trade Treaty lives up to the highest possible standards. This includes inter alia the development of mandatory human rights criteria in approval procedures, comprehensive scope as well as efficient enforcement mechanisms.

The Arms Trade Treaty provides for the establishment of a Secretariat (Article 18). Austria submitted an offer to host the ATT Secretariat in Vienna. A decision in favour of Vienna would represent an important success for the Austrian capital as a headquarters location.

11.4.3. National Export Control

In Austria, exports of conventional arms are governed by the Foreign Trade Act of 2011 (previously the Foreign Trade Act of 2005) and the War Material Act. Defence equipment subject to approval is defined in the Foreign Trade Act of 2011 and/or by the items listed in the EU Common Military List, the Second Foreign Trade Regulation of 2011 in conjunction with its Annex, and by the War Material Regulation, respectively. Austria is also committed to adhering to the Common Position defining common rules governing the control of exports of military technology and equipment, adopted by the EU Council in December 2008. This legally binding Common EU Position contributes substantially to further harmonising national export regimes and implementation activities.
12. Austrian Development Cooperation

12.1. Introduction

Austrian Development Cooperation (ADC) creates opportunities and contributes to promoting freedom and self-determination of all. Its primary goal is to reduce global poverty in all its dimensions. In this context a special focus is being placed on the empowerment of poor, disadvantaged and discriminated groups of the population in order to enable them to fully develop their economic capabilities and participate in social consensus-building processes. This reduction of social and regional imbalances will also continue to play an important role in the post-2015 agenda.

Securing peace and security, combating poverty in developing countries as well as preserving the environment and protecting natural resources are the key objectives of Austrian Development Cooperation (ADC) and are as such enshrined in the Federal Development Cooperation Act (DCA). The basic principles applied by ADC are the partner countries’ right to choose their own development agenda, consideration of cultural and social conditions, equality between women and men as well as respecting the needs of children and people with disabilities.

Relevant activities in the field of development cooperation are coordinated by the MFA, which also holds responsibility for the strategic orientation of ADC. The Austrian Development Agency (ADA) implements the ADC programmes and projects.

As a member of the EU, the OECD, the UN and the World Bank Group, Austria contributes proactively to shaping international development policy within the relevant bodies.

12.1.1. Thematic Priorities

The thematic priorities for ADC are derived from the Three-Year Programme of Austrian Development Policy 2013–2015 and include water, renewable energy, private sector development, the promotion of human rights, human security and peace as well as the rule of law.

The common consideration of the topics water, energy and food security is covered by the nexus approach, which focuses on the interaction between these areas of work in order to achieve optimal development outcomes. Building on the relevant activities launched in 2013, case studies were conducted in Ethiopia and Burkina Faso. The results were included in the nexus guidance document, which was prepared in cooperation with the Sustainable Europe Research Institute (SERI).

Issues relating to food security and the human right to food continued to play a central role in 2014. The challenges related to sustainable rural development were taken account of in Austria and at international level both in the
relevant discussions and by coordinating systemic, integrated and territorial approaches. In this context, mitigating the impact of climate change, increasing resilience, enhancing local value added and common guidelines for the use of and access to land and other natural resources are playing an increasingly important role. The topic were thus also discussed at the “Agrinatura” conference, which was held in Vienna at the beginning of May.

ADC supports national decentralisation processes in the partner countries through complementary intervention at decentralised level. In the context of the international donors’ working group on “Decentralization and Local Governance” a three-day training course was held in Vienna. The concept of "political economy" is highly relevant in this respect. Its role is, however, not only limited to the aspect of decentralisation but relates to all areas of development cooperation. The ADA has taken account of this important fact by assuming the chair of the expert group “Political Economy for Practitioners” (PEP) of Learn4Dev and by contributing pro-actively to preparing common teaching materials and training courses.

The enhanced consideration of the topic of governance and human rights/human rights-based approach in ADC was a special focus of the new country programming activities with respect to Kosovo and Bhutan as well as in the context of this year’s priority, i.e. private sector development. A process of strategic cooperation between ADC and the Laxenburg-based International Anti-Corruption Academy (IACA) was launched and cooperation with the International Center for Transitional Justice (ICTJ) in the Great Lakes Region was initiated. A panel discussion on the topic of inclusion was organised in the context of the working group “People with Disabilities and ADC”. ADC also contributed to activities launched by the Task Force on Human Trafficking at EU and UN level.

In the field of security and development, an international conference was held on the topic of women, peace and security and UNSC Resolution 1325 (2000) and attended by more than 60 experts. Programmes aimed at supporting the Gender, Peace & Security Programme of the African Union (AU) and/or capabilities development in the Economic Community of West African States were continued. A contribution towards the protection of children in armed conflict and ensuring access to education was made by supporting the EU initiative “Children of Peace” of the EC Directorate General for Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection (ECHO). On 2 and 3 December, the Fourth Annual Meeting of the 3C Approach was held in inter-ministerial format with the involvement of participants from civil society. The Austrian 3C approach is based on an international conference held in Vienna in 2010, which prepared the ground for the Vienna 3C Appeal and the Strategic Guideline on Security and Development in Austrian development policy. The 3Cs stand for coordinated, complementary and coherent action taken by of all stakeholders and act as the basis for the Whole-of-Government/Nation approach in fragile situations. The topics addressed at the annual meeting
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were the new draft concept for operations abroad and the implementation of the Strategic Guideline on Security and Development with a special focus on mediation and peace building, security sector reform in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Moldova and Kenya as well as the development of a nationwide West Africa Strategy. A roundtable meeting on the National Foreign Deployment Concept abroad was held on 6 November. The Austrian Peacebuilding Platform was also set up in 2014.

A priority in the field of gender was the above mentioned conference on UNSC Resolution 1325 (2000) organised in cooperation with the ADA, the Austrian Parliament, Federal Ministry for Defence and Sports, the Bruno Kreisky Forum for International Dialogue, the Diplomatic Academy of Vienna, and the International Peace Institute (IPI). These recommendations are to be incorporated in the Global Study being prepared by UN Women. In the context of the comprehensive measures towards broadening gender competence, the ADA conducted an in-house gender training session directed at coordination office staff.

In the education and science sector, the priorities pursued by ADC related to vocational education and higher education. The higher education programme Austrian Partnership Programme in Higher Education and Research for Development (APPEAR) enables multi-annual partnerships between higher education and/or research institutions in the priority countries of ADC and Austria and is aimed at enabling comprehensive capacity development (strengthening training, research, management). The first academic partnerships under this programme were successfully completed in 2014. Countries in the key regions Danube region/Western Balkans and Black Sea region/South Caucasus were supported in the reform of their respective vocational training sectors and – in cooperation with the Federal Ministry of Science, Research and Economy – in their integration within the European Higher Education and Research Area.

In the water and sanitation sector, Austria is active at bilateral level in Albania, Moldova, Mozambique, Uganda and in the occupied Palestinian territories. In Moldova, Austria has cooperated for many years with Switzerland. A common comprehensive analysis of the water sector will contribute to further strengthening this cooperation and facilitate a strategic basis. In Mozambique, Austria will in future contribute in the context of a common sector programme with the government, which will further raise efficiency and effectiveness levels as well as Austria’s visibility as it places a stronger focus on the partner country and on harmonisation with other donors. In cooperation with the Federal Ministry of Finance, ADC supports the African Water Facility by providing technical expert knowledge and funding. It also contributes to the content-related and strategic design of the World Bank’s Water and Sanitation Programme. Together with the Federal Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, Environment and Water Management, ADC supports the Global Water Partnership in improving water management on the African
continent. The ADA’s budget in the water sector is doubled by the allocation of EU and third party funding.

In the area of **sustainable energy**, activities inter alia focused on the necessary organisational preparations for the establishment of further regional centres for renewable energy and energy efficiency. Support for the establishment of energy centres for the eastern (East African Community, **EAC**) and southern (Southern African Development Community, **SADC**) communities was contractually agreed with UNIDO. By 2016, the potential for using clean energy is thus promoted for a total of 34 African states, providing access to affordable and reliable energy services more than 300 million people. An agreement on cooperation between Caribbean and Pacific states and Austria was signed in March between UNIDO, SIDS-DOCK (small island development states) and the MFA. In December, a contractual basis for ADC support in setting up a centre for sustainable energy supply (Caribbean Centre for Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency, **CCREEE**) was established with UNIDO.

In the thematic area of **environment and natural resources** the topic of climate change continued to dominate the agenda. The ongoing allocation of funding for climate relevant measures and the preparation of an accreditation with the Green Climate Fund, capitalised at the end of 2014, are key areas of activity. Another priority was following the post-2015 discussion at UN level and the development of thematic statements in the context of EU coordination.

### 12.1.2. Policy Coherence

Austria regards development policy as a national task. This principle of policy coherence is thus also enshrined in Article 1 paragraph 5 of the Federal Development Cooperation Act. In its current Government Programme 2013–2018 the Federal Government also refers explicitly to policy coherence.

The level of coherence is to be increased inter alia by involving all stakeholders in strategic planning processes, such as the Three-Year Programme of Austrian Development Policy, country and regional strategies or thematic-strategic guidelines. To this end, the preparation of the Three-Year Programme 2016–2018 is based on a comprehensive consultation process. In the context of the preparation process, the “Entwicklungspolitische Jour Fixe” (jour fixe on development policy issues) was held on 27 October. At the invitation of Federal Minister Sebastian Kurz, representatives from ministries, civil society, business and science contributed to this central networking platform involving all Austrian players in the field of development policy.

With a view to enhancing policy coherence, consultations were held on the Regional Strategy Danube Region/Western Balkans and on the Regional Strategy Western Balkans.
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In the thematic area of “environment and development” and “security and development”, progress was made towards a whole-of-government approach. In line with the Strategic Guideline “Security and Development in Austrian Development Policy” of October 2011, the Austrian Peacebuilding Platform, a platform for governmental and non-governmental players in the field of peacebuilding was set up on 16 January.

Under the heading of “development policy, a whole-of-government task”, a new training programme was established at the Verwaltungsakademie des Bundes (Austrian Federal Academy of Public Administration). This programme is directed at staff working for federal and province administration authorities and their independent agencies, who deal directly or indirectly with development policy and development cooperation as part of their work.

Austria also participates regularly in both the EU’s and the OECD’s networks for policy coherence.

12.1.3. Budget for Development Cooperation

According to preliminary data, Austrian Official Development Assistance (ODA) amounted to 895.46 million euros, i.e. 0.27 % of gross national income (GNI), in 2014.

12.1.4. Evaluation

Under the sharing of responsibilities agreement, the MFA is responsible for selecting the strategic evaluations and their themes, while the ADA is in charge of operational management. Strategic evaluations generally cover specific ADC themes, sectors, instruments or country strategies. These strategic evaluations are tendered in accordance with the Austrian Federal Law on Public Procurement and carried out by organisations and companies, which are selected on the basis of a technical appraisal of their content-related and methodical concepts and are subsequently awarded contracts to perform the evaluation.

The evaluation of development policy communication and education was completed and presented. Work commenced on strategic evaluations of cooperation with Austrian business, on the environment and of the country strategy Uganda and recommendations on existing evaluations/reviews (gender, private sector, Bhutan, APPEAR) were further implemented and/or completed.

At international level, the MFA and the ADA were regularly represented on the competent evaluation bodies and networks within the EU, the group of German-speaking evaluation services (DACHI) – which is composed of Belgium, Germany, the Netherlands, Switzerland and Luxembourg – and in the
OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC). Via the ADA, Austria has held the vice-chair in the DAC Evaluation Committee since 2013.

12.2. Bilateral Development Cooperation

12.2.1. Geographic Priorities

12.2.1.1. Key Region Caribbean

Since 2007, the Caribbean region, which is especially prone to natural disasters, has been a priority region of ADC. With a view to promoting regional integration, the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) is the main cooperation partner. The focus is on strengthening local capacities in the field of disaster risk management as well as renewable energies and energy efficiency.

Together with UNIDO, the foundation stone was laid for the Caribbean Centre for Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency (CCREEE) in 2014. In close cooperation with the energy unit at CARICOM, it provides expert knowledge for analysing the potential for renewable energy in the region, fosters investment in this sector and thus promotes access to energy efficient technologies in the Caribbean.

ADC continued to provide support to CARICOM’s Caribbean disaster emergency response management agency (CDEMA) in considering and adapting to the impacts of climate change in the national disaster protection plans prepared by the individual Caribbean states. Furthermore, ADC supported the activities of the UN regional Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA) in the Caribbean with respect to disaster prevention in the region.

The end of the year 2013 also marked the successful completion of the sustainable “phasing-out” process for bilateral programmes with Nicaragua and the regional programmes with Central America. Successful cooperation with NGOs in the context of economic partnerships and in education was continued.

12.2.1.2. Key Region West Africa

In this key region, Austria continued to focus on the thematic priorities of energy, conflict prevention as well as food security and resilience.

In addition to the ongoing projects with civil society organisations and UNDOC in the field of conflict prevention, a project aimed at supporting the Kofi Annan International Peacekeeping Training Center was prepared in collaboration with the Federal Ministry of Defence and Sports.

The regional centre for renewable energy and energy efficiency (ECREEE) has successfully strengthened its position as a specialised regional institution for renewable energies and energy efficiency at regional and international level.
Austria, which provides both personnel and financial support to the centre, remains an important partner.

Against the background of the food crisis across the entire Sahel region, the set of issues related to food, food security and securing of livelihoods as well as resilience were made a special priority of ADC and were pursued in particular in cooperation with the OECD Sahel and West Africa Club (SWAC) and ECOWAS. This area of activity involves inter alia cooperation with NGOs, humanitarian assistance and agricultural research.

Against the background of the Ebola crisis, humanitarian assistance measures are a focal area of Austrian commitment. The relevant activities were targeted at prevention, training of medical staff and providing specific information to the public in order to stem the further expansion of Ebola. ADC moreover contributed one million euros to the regional Ebola crisis programme operated by ECHO in the field of preventive action in Burkina Faso.

In the priority country Burkina Faso, Austria – based on the bilateral cooperation agreement which was extended in agreement with the Ministry of Economy and Finance of Burkina Faso until 2016 – continued to provide support in the areas of vocational education and training, the promotion of trades and crafts and rural development. As well as promoting the development and implementation of national sectoral policies in these areas, Austria supported strengthening resilience with regard to food security and climate change.

In the Boucle de Mouhoun region, activities are based on an integrated approach. A regional development fund proved an efficient tool in this context. This focus on people’s needs and the direct involvement of target groups proved to be the fund’s special strengths. The projects funded usually succeed very quickly and have a positive and sustainable impact on people’s living conditions and circumstances. Such successful projects included a small dairy, honey production, small-scale infrastructure for livestock and general produce markets, drinking water supply and training in various crafts and trades. The third phase of this regional development programme places a special focus on land-related issues, conflict prevention and climate changes as well as resilience.

Timely implementation of the ongoing interventions and especially cooperation with partner ministries is, however, impacted by political upheaval.

12.2.1.3. East Africa

In the priority country Ethiopia, ADC was mainly focused on the fields of rural development and/or food security. In cooperation with the UN Development Programme (UNDP), a project was initiated aimed at strengthening institutions that are active in the fields of transparency, the rule of law and human rights. Activities in the fields of protection of natural resources, gender, science and research were also funded.
ADC contributes to funding a national multi-donor programme, which aims to improve decentralised public services in the healthcare, education, agricultural and water supply sectors. The programme is led by the World Bank and the Ethiopian government provides half of the funding. The programme aims to improve public services in the healthcare, education, agricultural and water supply sectors. Funding of agricultural advisory services contributed to increasing yields for the most important crops across the country and enabled promotion of more resource-friendly soil and land management.

In line with the national Poverty Eradication Action Plan, ADC activities in the priority country Uganda focus primarily on the two areas of water supply and sanitation as well as law, the justice sector and peace. ADC also supports common donor/basket funding programmes in both areas. In the field of law, justice and peace it also strove to support NGOs in their work and to strengthen accountability and access to law in Uganda. Together with other donors, Austria furthermore supports a facility for the promotion of democracy and good governance under which NGOs as well as government institutions and parliament may apply for funding. In addition to this funding, the EU commissioned ADC with allocating a further 3.5 million euros for this facility. This is supplemented by funding provided to NGO, scholarship, study and science programmes.

The implementation of an EU-funded project involving a total volume of more than 30 million euros for investments in water supply and sanitation in small rural cities is also progressing successfully.

12.2.1.4. Key Region Southern Africa

In the key region Southern Africa, the rule of law, land use and renewable energy are the central areas of ADC activities. This thematic focus of cooperation is outlined in the open-ended Memorandum of Understanding between Austria and the Southern Development Community (SADC). Regional involvement of ADC takes place under the “Regional Strategy Paper and Regional Indicative Programme concluded between the EC and cooperation partners with the SADC.

The general objective of regional ADC involvement is based on strengthening democratic processes as the prerequisite for sustainable social and economic growth. ADC thus contributes to reducing poverty in the SADC area.

The country strategy 2009–2013 for the priority country Mozambique was drafted on the basis of its current Government Programme and the Plan for the Reduction of Absolute Poverty 2011–2014. As agreed with the government of Mozambique, the province of Sofala is an ADC priority region; preparations for the common development of a new country strategy together with the government of Mozambique are currently underway.

The relevant activities are directed at promoting Mozambique’s decentralisation policy through de-concentration of state administration in the prior-
ity areas of agriculture, water and sanitation as well as strengthening of the 13 autonomous communities. The national community development programme promotes 13 autonomous cities and/or communities in the provinces of Sofala, Zambézia, Nampula, Cabo Delgado and Niassa and is co-funded by Denmark, Switzerland and ADC. Under this programme development plans were prepared for eleven communities and plans developed for waste management in eight. A simplified financial system that is compatible with the national financial system was introduced in all communities.

In Mozambique, ADC makes available both General Budget Support and Sector Budget Support which is earmarked for the implementation of the National Agricultural Development Strategy. At the level of the province of Sofala, ADC promotes the use of sustainable cultivation methods and irrigation via small systems as well as further training and agricultural research enabling Sector Support to be linked with subnational implementation.

12.2.1.5. Key Region Himalayas – Hindu Kush

ADC supports common goals of the region pursued under the auspices of the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD). Activities focus on strengthening resilience against environmental and climate change as well as the protection of natural resources and the improvement of living conditions through enhanced cross-border cooperation.

The new country strategy for the priority country Bhutan 2014–2018, which is coordinated with the 11th Five Year Plan of Bhutan, focuses on the traditional priority sectors energy, tourism and governance. With respect to the reclassification of Bhutan as a middle income country, expected for 2020, the planning process for a transition from shaping development cooperation to interest-driven broad-based partnership in the fields of politics, business and environment has started.

In order to successfully round-off Austrian involvement in the energy sector there will be further consolidation ensuring the institutional sustainability of current interventions. This is based on support provided to operators in terms of improved management of water resources in order to retain the ecosystems of the river courses affected by the construction of power plants and to guarantee the plants’ long term reliability.

Cooperation in the field of tourism continues to be directed towards further high-quality development of the training centre for tourism and hotel management, the Royal Institute for Tourism and Hospitality. Three training courses have already been held and 145 students have successfully graduated; 97 % of graduates found a job. The fourth training course started in summer and 91 students enrolled. ADC is also assisting the Tourism Council Bhutan in preparing a tourism plan for three districts in the East of the country. Based on the development of value added chains, the local population’s
access to the market, employment and income is to be facilitated and a contribution shall be made towards preserving ecosystems.

Together with the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (DEZA), cooperation in the legal sector is being continued. So far, with Austrian support fourteen judges have completed their master studies. All 300 judicial officers have benefited from attending basic and further training law courses. Five district courthouses have been built and equipped with the necessary technical facilities. The construction of two courthouses and the continuation of academic training provided to judges and lawyers will further strengthen relations between the three countries. An institutional partnership between the Royal Institute of Law, which is currently being established, and an Austrian law department is planned. The contribution to the One UN Programme in Bhutan promotes interventions aimed at empowerment and the protection of victims of gender-specific violence as well as the further development of gender specific budget planning.

12.2.1.6. Priority Palestinian Territories

The criteria for the selection of ADC programmes and projects are compliance with the Palestinian National Development Plan 2014–2016 and regard for both parts of the Palestinian Territories, i.e. the Gaza Strip and the West Bank. ADC involvement focused on the areas of health, water, humanitarian aid and co-funding of a multi-donor programme in Area C. ADC programmes are coordinated with the relevant ministries and other bilateral donors and implemented largely through Palestinian ministries, the European Commission and international organisations (such as the UNRWA and UNDP). Other projects currently in place relate to NGO co-funding and cooperation in the higher education sector as well as in the context of the APPEAR Programme.

12.2.1.7. South East / Eastern Europe

12.2.1.7.1. Key Region Danube Region/Western Balkans

Support with respect to EU integration and promotion of regional cooperation remained the key focus of cooperation with the Western Balkans. Work began on the preparation of a whole-of-government-based regional strategy for the key region Danube Region/Western Balkans under a comprehensive inter-ministerial coordination process. As a result of the foreign and development policy focus on the geographic priority Danube Region/Western Balkans, the ADA regional budget line was increased by 4 million euros.

Sectoral and thematic priorities in the region were private sector development and development with a focus on employment, education including higher education and labour market-oriented vocational training, the environment/

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4 A territory within the Palestinian Territories that is administered by Israel based on the Oslo Accords
climate change, water/sanitation and energy as well as strengthening decentralisation, governance, human rights, the rule of law and civil society. Based on the decision by Federal Minister Kurz and the ADA Supervisory Board in June, bilateral development cooperation with Albania will not be phased out – as originally planned – by the end of the year, but will be continued for an unlimited period and requires a new country strategy 2015–2020 with a whole-of-government approach. The relevant activities were thus launched in November and are being coordinated with the Albanian government, the donor community and all governmental and non-governmental DC players in Austria.

In the priority country Albania, ADC support focused mainly on the fields of water and sanitation, labour market-oriented vocational education, regional development (North Albania) and integration of marginalised social groups. In the cross-cutting areas of governance and gender equality, the focus was placed on improving public administration through capacity development and developing the Integrated Planning System, establishing Gender Focal Points as well as on gender responsive budgeting. The ADA allocated EU funds in the context of delegated cooperation and also played a leading role in donor coordination with respect to support for the One-UN Initiative.

Cooperation in the priority country Kosovo is based on the country strategy 2013–2020 under which measures mainly in the fields of education (focusing on tertiary education) and private sector development (focusing on rural development) are being funded. In the priority sector of tertiary education, with the signing of an agreement on delegated cooperation of the EC to the ADA further measures were launched that build on previous successful ADC activities in this area and contributed substantially to stabilising the tertiary sector. Cross-cutting themes in Kosovo are governance, gender equality and the environment. Special attention is being placed on strengthening public administration and government institutions.

Inter-ethnic cooperation and conflict prevention are among the goals pursued by the quadrilateral housing and integration project directed at the Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian minorities in Gjakova/Djakovica in West Kosovo. This project is co-funded by ADC, Slovenia and Liechtenstein and implemented by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation. Cooperation with UN agencies (UNICEF and UNDP) was continued.

Since 2012, the ADA has been entrusted with the implementation of the project Socio-economic Development of the Danube Serbia Region, which is mainly funded through the pre-accession instrument of the EC. The entire project budget amounts to some 19.5 million euros and also includes ADC co-funding of one million euros. The measures launched under this project relate mainly to strengthening the tourism profile of Serbia’s Danube region, support for 17 projects in communities along the Danube in Serbia aimed at developing and tapping into the region’s tourism potential, the provision of technical assistance in developing projects eligible for funding in the tour-
ism and infrastructure sectors as well as the development of water supply infrastructure for the municipality of Veliko Gradište and a tourism-oriented revitalisation of the Golubac fortress.

12.2.1.7.2. Key Region Black Sea / South Caucasus

Based on the bilateral country strategies and programmes for Armenia and Georgia (2012–2020), Austrian development involvement in the South Caucasus focuses on the agricultural and forestry sector. ADC interventions focusing on rural development are aimed at improving framework conditions in order to increase local value added and intensify trade and investment.

Cross-cutting themes include conflict prevention based on confidence and security building measures in the Georgian and Armenian border regions as well as governance and decentralisation. Geographically, the focus is placed on the southern border region of Georgia and on the northern border region of Albania with the prospect of cross-border cooperation especially in economic matters. In September, an ADC office was opened in Yerevan by Federal Minister Sebastian Kurz.

The most important goal of ADC activities in the priority country Moldova is eliminating poverty and creating new prospects for the future for those living in rural areas. In Moldova, which is still the poorest country in Europe, this goal is pursued on the one hand by improving water supply and effluent disposal under a large-scale water supply and sanitation project in Nisporeni that is co-funded by ADC, the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (DEZA) and the EU, and on the other hand with the provision of labour market-oriented vocational training and the promotion of vocational schools. Alongside vocational training, ADC also focused on providing vocational orientation for young people in order to enhance their prospects for the future in the country. Other activities include the provision of EU-oriented strengthening of public administration and of confidence-building measures in the region of Transnistria. In order to achieve these goals, ADC supports a project operated by the Council of Europe (CoE) which strives to support the strengthening of civil society on both sides of the Dniester River as a conflict resolution mechanism.

In the context of the OECD-DAC peer review in June, ADC in the priority country Moldova was reviewed by Germany and Switzerland; as one of the findings produced by this review, the OECD describes ADC as a pragmatic, predictable and reliable partner of the republic of Moldova. 2014 saw the kick-off for the programming activities related to the new country programme 2016–2020.

12.2.2. Civil Society Co-funding

Civil society organisations are important partners of ADC. Under Civil Society Cooperation International, programmes and projects launched on civil
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society's own initiative and financed by both their own funding as well as funding provided by ADC are being implemented.

Eleven Austrian civil society organisations thus hold framework programme agreements with a total contractual value of approximately 20 million euros, covering a period of three years and implement projects with this funding. In Burkina Faso, an annual total of 150,000 people thus receive rehabilitation services including ophthalmic treatment, physiotherapy and orthopaedic treatment. A total of 2,000 children with disabilities now have the opportunity to go to school or start vocational training and some 150 government officials acquire the necessary knowledge and skills to include people with disabilities in their government programmes.

In South Caucasus, 19 communities are supported across borders in preparing for disasters and crisis and in responding quickly to manage such events. To this end, risk analyses and emergency planning procedures are prepared in collaboration with the local population and municipal administrations. These programmes directly reach out to approximately 134,000 beneficiaries and in the long term four regions in three countries involving a total population of some 860,000 will benefit from these activities.

In former conflict regions in Uganda, Burundi and Nepal some 35,000 women and their family members were given support and received psycho-social care with a view to empowering them to stand up for their rights. An important component in this context was work with men aimed at bringing about a change in their role behaviour and to curb physical violence.

In the field of Personnel Development Cooperation a programme for the posting of experts and interns was again successfully implemented in 2014.

The role of civil society organisations as independent and indispensable development cooperation players plays an eminent role at international level. In their work, NGOs are increasingly focusing on political dialogue in order to achieve sustainable changes and improvements in the partner countries. Together with the Austrian platform “AG Globale Verantwortung” (WG global responsibility), a three-year programme is being successfully implemented. The objective of the programme is the strengthening of the competences of Austrian NGOs as well as active co-shaping of development policy framework conditions at European and international level.

In the field of Development Policy Communication and Training, funding of four million euros was provided to NGO projects. A key priority was placed on the topic of private sector development and development, by implementing inter alia information and discussion events of the umbrella association of development policy organisations together with the Austrian Economic Chamber and the Austrian Federation of Industries. Further projects aimed at informing and empowering socially responsible public procurement or facilitated specialised meetings and seminars at the interface between politics, business and civil society.
12.3. Multilateral Development Cooperation

12.3.1. The European Union

The EU (Member States and Commission) is the largest donor of Official Development Assistance (ODA) worldwide. Austria’s financial contribution to the EU’s development cooperation is the largest single item of Austrian ODA. In 2014, Austria contributed 235.57 million euros to development cooperation under the EU budget and the European Development Fund (EDF). This amounts to 26 per cent of Austria’s total ODA.

In 2014, the post-2015 agenda was the central strategic topic in the field of EDC. By the beginning of September, all working groups dealing with the three areas outlined in the post-2015 agenda (successor instrument to the Millennium Development Goals/MDGs, preparation of a proposal for the Sustainable Development Goals, Financing for Development) had submitted their final reports. In December, the UNSG presented his synthesis report, which was also welcomed by the EU Member States.

The EU deliberated intensively about further negotiation strategies and in December it adopted the Council Conclusions on a Transformative Post-2015 Agenda as a basis for the EU position at the intergovernmental negotiation rounds in New York.

Another priority task was the preparations for the European Year for Development 2015 (EYD). On the initiative of the MFA, a steering committee was set up in Austria, which coordinates the various activities aimed at implementing the EYD 2015 (for further information please see http://www.entwicklung.at/eyd2015).

As agreement on the Multi-annual EU Financial Framework 2014–2020 was reached at a very late stage, the majority of the EU Member States were not able to ratify the internal financing agreement on the 11th EDF (European Development Fund) in time. Therefore it became necessary to create an EDF bridging facility at the beginning of the year in order to avoid the risk of imminent insolvency.

As expected, the expiry of the transitional regulation in EPA – Economic Partnership Agreements in October added momentum to the negotiation process. It was possible to complete negotiations on the three further regional EPAs: West Africa, Southern Africa and East African Community (EAC).

As migration was the priority concern of the Italian EU Council Presidency, higher priority was also given to the sub-area of migration and development.

During the Greek EU Council Presidency in the first half of the year, Council Conclusions were adapted on a stronger role of the private sector in development cooperation and on a rights-based approach to development.

In the context of the subsequent Italian EU Council Presidency, Council Conclusions were adopted on food and nutrition security as well as on the
common EU position for the 2nd UN Conference on Landlocked Developing Countries that was held from 3 to 5 November in Vienna.

Austria focused specifically on the preparations for the post-2015 agenda and the European Year for Development. Austria also contributed to areas on which it has long-standing experience and specific know how, such as water, renewable energies and cooperation with the private sector.

12.3.2. The United Nations

The dominating topic in the field of UN development cooperation was the Post-2015 Development Agenda. The goal is on the one hand to develop a follow-up instrument to the Millennium Development Goals after their “expiry” in 2015 and, on the other hand to prepare the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as adopted at the Rio+20 Conference as well as sustainable development funding. On 4 December, the Secretary General of the United Nations (UNSG) presented his 47-page Synthesis Report on the Post-2015 Development Agenda entitled “The Road to Dignity by 2030: Ending Poverty, Transforming all Lives and Protecting the Planet” to the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA). The report summarises the contributions made by the Open Working Group (OWG) and other relevant groups of experts on the post-2015 agenda. In his report the UNSG embraces the 17 SDGs developed by the OWG and 169 targets.

From 30 June to 9 July, New York was the venue of the first High-level Political Forum (HLPF) under the auspices of the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), which was organised by the Austrian Presidency of ECOSOC. The question for the content-related design of the Post-2015 Development Agenda and its impact on the HLPF topped the discussions’ agenda. As a result of this two-week event and following the reform it had undergone, ECOSOC was successfully established as an important platform in the debate.

At the annual session of the UN Development Programme (UNDP) held from 23 to 27 June in Geneva, Administrator Helen Clark informed participants about activities in the field of crisis management. The UNDP sought to achieve the smoothest-possible transition from MDGs to SDGs. Austria made a core contribution of 1.58 million euros to the UNDP and also contributed to a project aimed at the strengthening the rule of law and the protection of human rights in Moldova.

The main topics on the agenda of the annual session of the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), held from 3 to 6 June in New York, were the annual report presented by Executive Director Anthony Lake on the Fund’s activities and results in the year 2013 and the final Results Framework of the UNICEF Strategic Plan for the period 2014–2017. Austria supported UNICEF’s work by providing a core contribution of 1.02 million euros and
also contributed to funding a project aimed at monitoring children’s rights in the context of the EU enlargement process.

The UN Capital Development Fund (UNCDF) has been vested with the mandate to eradicate poverty in the 48 least developed countries (LDCs) by granting micro loans and promoting local development. Austria supported the work of the UNCDF by providing a core contribution of 300,000 euros.

From 3 to 5 November the 2nd UN Conference on Landlocked Developing Countries was held in the Vienna International Center. The conference was opened by the UNSG, Federal President Heinz Fischer and – in his capacity as president of the conference – Federal Minister Sebastian Kurz. Attended by some 1,200 participants from 129 states, including several heads of state and government, as well as the heads of 20 international organisations and more than 20 organisations form the UN family, the LLDC conference was one of the largest and most high-level UN conferences held in Vienna in the last ten years.

12.3.3. OECD/DAC

Austria is one of the 28 members of the OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC), which is mandated with preparing qualitative targets for its members’ development cooperation, analysing their development cooperation performance (Official Development Assistance, ODA), and having quality and quantity of these activities reviewed by other members of the Committee (peer reviews). In 2014, Austria’s DC was subjected to a peer review, the results of which will be published in January 2015; the reviewing countries were Germany and Switzerland.

At the end of 2012/beginning of 2013, the former Norwegian Minister of the Environment and International Development, Erik Solheim, took the chair of the DAC. A topic that is currently the subject of lively discussions within the DAC is whether low-interest development cooperation loans and credits can be reported as ODA, and the definition of ODA in general.

In its Development Co-operation Report 2013, the DAC pointed out that annual development cooperation funding by its members had reached a peak in 2013 (totalling 134.8 billion US dollars).

12.3.4. Assignments of Young Austrians

Young Austrian university graduates are given the opportunity to serve on duty tours lasting a maximum of two years as Junior Professional Officers (JPOs) with UN organisations in order to gain first-hand experience of working in a multilateral environment. The MFA bears the costs of such placements. In 2014, a total of nine Austrian Junior Professional Officers worked
with various UN organisations, including UNICEF, SE4All, UNIS, UNDPI, UNDPA in Armenia, Burundi, New York and Vienna.

The European Commission’s Junior Experts in Delegations Training Programme enables qualified Austrian university graduates to complete a one to two year (at the maximum) duty tour with the EU delegations. After having passed the selection procedure for 2014–2016, one male Austrian worked with the EU delegation in Cuba and a female Austrian worked at the EU delegation in Cairo.
13. Global Environmental and Sustainability Policy


The High Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF; successor to the UN Commission on Sustainable Development), which met under the Austrian ECOSOC Presidency from 30 June to 9 July, dealt with achieving the Millennium Development Goals and charting the way for a Post-2015 Development Agenda. The year 2014 was largely dedicated to further elaborating the global Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in line with the final document of the UN Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20) held in June 2012. These goals will apply to both developing and industrialised countries. The post-2015 agenda, with the SDGs as its core element, is to be adopted at Heads of State and Government level in September 2015. This agenda is also very relevant from the global environmental protection point of view, as – alongside its social and economic dimensions – the environmental dimension of sustainable development is explicitly taken account of in the target catalogue (see also Chapters 12.3.1. and 12.3.2.)

13.2. United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)

The first session of the newly established UN Environment Assembly (UNEA), held from 23 to 27 June in Nairobi, mainly focused on preparing contributions for the post-2015 agenda. Another priority topic was illegal trade in wildlife and its products.

UNEP is mainly active in the fields of climate change, natural disasters and conflicts, management of eco systems, environmental governance, harmful chemical substances and hazardous waste as well as resource efficiency.

13.3. Global Environmental Protection Agreements and Initiatives

At the 65th Annual Meeting of the International Whaling Commission (IWC), held from 15 to 18 September in Portorož (Slovenia), the package on the quota for Greenland, coordinated in the EU and the subject of lengthy negotiations, was adopted by majority. After the International Court of Justice (ICJ) had stated in March that Japanese Whaling largely served commercial rather than scientific purposes, a resolution incorporated this judgement in the IWC work programme.

From 29 September to 18 October, the 12th Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) as well as the Meetings of the Parties to the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety and of the Nagoya Protocol on access to genetic resources and fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising
from their utilization met in Pyeongchang (Republic of Korea). The meetings dealt with the interim review of the implementation of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity, the achievement of the 20 Aichi targets on the global protection of biodiversity, the establishment of marine protected areas and the application of the precautionary principle in the field of “synthetic biology”. Negotiations in the context of the Cartagena Protocol focused on socio-economic considerations and risk assessment while the main topic discussed at the Nagoya Protocol Meeting was the planned benefit sharing mechanism.

The 11th Conference of the Parties to the Bonn Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals, held in Quito (Ecuador) from 4 to 9 November, adopted resolutions on marine wildlife, in particular on sharks and whales, as well as decisions on the protection of migratory birds, the most important group of migratory animals in Austria. Agreement was also reached on imposing further restrictions on the use of lead in ammunition and in fishing.

From 3 to 7 November, the Sixth Session of the Intergovernmental Negotiation Committee (INC6) on the Minamata Convention aimed at the reduction of toxic mercury dealt in Bangkok with the preparations for the first Conference of the Parties.

At the 26th Meeting of the Parties to the Montreal Protocol and the 10th Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Vienna Convention on the Protection of the Ozone Layer from 17 to 21 November in Paris, negotiations led to the replenishment of the Multilateral Fund (MLF) that provides developing countries with funding to phase out ozone-depleting technologies. Apart from the MLF, the Global Environment Facility (GEF) (co-)funds the implementation of multilateral chemicals and waste conventions and processes by developing countries and newly industrialized countries. A new window (focal area) for chemicals and waste was established at the GEF assembly held in May.

The Open-ended Working Group of the Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and their Disposal met on 16 to 19 September. The Open-ended Working Group of the Strategic Approach for International Chemicals Management (SAICM) convened on 15 to 17 December.

As contributions to the Pan-European Programme for Transport, Health and the Environment (THE PEP) of the Economic Commission of the UN for Europe (UNEC E) and the World Health Organisation (WHO), the First International klima:aktiv mobil Conference on the topic of “climate friendly mobility – opportunities for companies, cities and municipalities”, as well as the kick-off Workshop on THE PEP-Partnership were held in Vienna from 24 to 26 February.

The Paris Declaration, adopted by the Fourth High-level Meeting held by the THE PEP from 14 to 16 April, reaffirms the four priority goals: eco-
nomic stimulus and safeguarding jobs through investment in environmental friendly and health promoting transport; mobility management and efficiency increase in transport; reduction of emissions, greenhouse gases, air pollutants and noise; support for health-promoting and safe mobility. Integration of transport, health and environmental aspects in urban and spatial planning was adopted as the fifth priority goal.

The 6th Meeting of the Parties to the Espoo Convention of the UNECE on Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) in a Transboundary Context, held in Geneva from 3 to 5 June, dealt inter alia with recommendations by the specifically established Implementation Committee (IC) including on the topic of extending the life cycle of nuclear power plants (NPP). A decision on the NPP Rivne in the Ukraine was considered a project covered by the Espoo Convention for which a (transboundary) EIA procedure involving the potentially affected states should have have been conducted. A generally applicable statement on mandatory EIAs for life cycle extensions of NPP – as proposed by the IC – was, however, not endorsed.

The 8th Conference of the Parties to the UNECE Helsinki Convention on Transboundary Effects of Industrial Accidents, which convened in Geneva from 3 to 5 December, dealt with issues related to the implementation of the convention and the assistance programmes, as well as with adaptation of its annexes. This means that in future there will be consistency in terms of scope in this field and thus administrative simplification in Europe and in Austria.

The Fifth Meeting of the Parties to the UNECE Aarhus Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters, held in Maastricht from 29 June to 2 July, assessed current developments and defined the programme for the forthcoming three year period. A Joint High-level Segment, held together with the second Meeting of the Parties to the PRTR Protocol (Pollutant Release and Transfer Register) from 2 to 4 July, adopted the Maastricht Declaration on 2 July. It stresses the importance of the Aarhus Convention and its Protocol for transparency and democracy in the light of current developments in the information age and in view of the future in line with the post-2015 agenda as well as cross-connections to other international conventions and processes and their strengthening and further development.

At its 33rd session, held in Geneva from 8 to 12 December, the Executive Body of the UNECE Convention on Long-range Transboundary Air Pollution adopted long-term financing for the co-operative programme for monitoring and evaluation of the long-range transmissions of air pollutants in Europe (EMEP). It also approved guidance as to contents and design of the assessment report to be prepared by 2016, which will be inter alia directed at environmental policy decision-makers in the UNECE region. A newly established Task Force on Techno-Economic Issues (TFTEI) will act as a technical clearinghouse for the three most recent protocols (Persistent Organic Pollutants,
Heavy Metals and Gothenburg Protocol) to assist the states of Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia with ratification and implementation.

The 20th Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC, COP 20/CMP 10) convened from 1 to 12 December in Lima and was a decisive intermediate step on the way towards a comprehensive global climate protection agreement, to be adopted at the Paris conference at the end of 2015. The positive momentum, created by the climate summit of UNSG Ban Ki-moon on 23 September in New York, contributed to a generally friendly and relaxed negotiation atmosphere. Likewise, announcements of intended nationally determined contributions (INDs), especially on the part of the EU and both by the USA and China, and the offers presented for the initial capitalisation of the Green Climate Fund (GCF), had a positive impact. Nevertheless, agreement on the “Lima Call for Climate Action” could only be reached in an extended session of the conference, especially as questions relating to differentiation between industrialised and developing countries and to international climate financing remained controversial until the end.

13.4. Sustainable Energy for All

Sustainable Energy for All (SE4All) was launched as an initiative by UNSG Ban Ki-moon in 2011 and is headed by his Special Representative Kandeh Yumkella. The opening of the Secretariat (Global Facilitation Team) on 3 November by the UN Secretary-General in Vienna contributed to further strengthening Vienna’s position as international energy hub. The SE4All Office in Vienna currently employs fifteen staff. Efforts aimed at establishing the legal personality of SE4All were further promoted. Apart from coordinating projects of the UN Decade for SE4All, the initiative works towards defining an Energy Sustainable Development Goal. The establishment of the initiative’s office in Vienna can be considered a consequence of Austria’s consistent commitment to promoting sustainable energy and as a strengthening of Vienna’s position as a location for international organisations.

13.5. Nuclear Safety

Austria remains committed to maintaining its clear opposition to nuclear power both bilaterally and within international organisations. For Austria, nuclear power is neither a sustainable form of energy nor is it a viable or acceptable option for tackling climate change.

Taking into account the entire fuel cycle (although the costs of the globally unresolved question of final storage remain wholly uncertain) and the costs involved in building, operating and finally decommissioning the plants, the operation of nuclear power plants is clearly not economically viable. Operating countries thus increasingly call for public subsidies.
Against this background, the College of the European Commission on 8 October approved by majority decision British state aid to the planned nuclear power plant Hinkley Point C and inter alia a guaranteed fixed price for the electricity produced over a period of 35 years as well as credit guarantees for financing the project. Based on the relevant resolution by the Austrian National Council of 22 October (46/E XXV. GP), Austria will file an action for annulment against this decision with the European Court of Justice. Luxembourg officially declared that it will join the action.

Within the framework of EURATOM, Austria also consistently opposes an EU-funded expansion of nuclear energy. This position was also persistently defended in the negotiations on the Framework Programme for Research 2013/2014. Furthermore, the implementation of the programme is closely monitored in the context of cooperation in the field of nuclear safety (Instrument for Nuclear Safety Cooperation – INSC).

With regard to the planned expansion of the Temelin nuclear power plant in the Czech Republic involving the construction of two additional reactors as well as the expansion of the Mochovce nuclear power plant in Slovakia, Austria continues to make full use of all available means of intervention and influence based on the framework of cross-border Environmental Impact Assessments in line with the relevant international agreements and EU legislation.

This also holds true for the final storage of nuclear waste. After initial non-invasive surveys at the surface of seven potential sites for permanent nuclear waste repositories in the Czech Republic had been approved at the end of October, the Federal Government will now seek to convince the Czech Republic at all levels to refrain from building a permanent nuclear waste repository close to the Austrian border. First of all the Financial Procurator’s Office will be requested to examine legal means provided under Czech law. Furthermore, the Constitutional Service at the Federal Chancellery together with the Office of the Legal Adviser at the MFA are to examine potential legal action at EU level and, as required, make full use of all legal options available under European law.

The safety and security dialogues, conducted on the basis of bilateral agreements with those neighbouring states operating or planning to build nuclear power plants, were continued. Within the framework of these nuclear information agreements, experts meetings were held in 2014 with Germany, Switzerland, Slovakia, Slovenia, the Czech Republic and Hungary.
14.1. Objectives and Priorities

International cultural policy is one of those creative elements of Austrian foreign policy that promote communication and heightened awareness of Austria's foreign policy concerns in an increasingly interlinked world and against the background of mutually influencing cultures. Along with its rich artistic and cultural heritage, Austria boasts a vibrant creative and innovative contemporary culture. Austria is associated with its cultural and scientific achievements in many countries around the world. This is a benefit that should indeed be used.

The focus of international cultural policy activities is thus directed towards presenting and supporting Austria's contemporary creative achievements in the fields of arts and science. The further development of culture, arts and science requires international exchange. Contacts and encounters across borders are a source of creative ideas and impulses and at the same time create opportunities for further professional and personal development.

The worldwide international cultural network prepares the ground for future cooperation, explores opportunities for international collaboration, defines topics and formulates contents, prepares cooperation activities, finds partnerships and facilitates encounters.

International cultural policy provides a proactive contribution towards promoting European integration and by launching initiatives in the field of dialogue among cultures and religions it also makes contributions towards building confidence and peace.

All these activities are implemented by Austria's international cultural policy network, which currently consists of 31 Austrian Cultural Fora and Cooperation Offices, 88 embassies and consulates-general, 64 Austria Libraries (Österreich-Bibliotheken), eight Austria Institutes (Österreich-Institute) and two scientific-technical offices.

Cultural activities abroad must be based on clearly defined priorities. Within a multi-year planning period, the MFA thus sets both geographic and content-related priorities, which are managed through the allocation of varying annual cultural budgets to the representations abroad. The geographic priorities set by Austrian foreign policy, i.e. the Danube region, the Black Sea area and the Western Balkans, are thus synergistically reflected in international cultural activities.

The cultural, political, economic and human relations that have developed over the centuries in the Danube region form a strong foundation for future joint development. The important role played by this European key region in the 21st century is corroborated by the EU Strategy for the Danube Region. Cross-border cooperation involving 14 partners – nine EU Member States and five European countries – opens up new opportunities for joint activities
in the fields of politics and business, culture, science and education as well as information and communication. Under the heading of “Inclusive & Prosperous – Good Governance for a Strong Danube Region”, the Third Annual Forum of the EU Strategy for the Danube Region was held in Vienna from 26 to 27 June and focused on integration and social issues.

In the context of Platform Culture – Central Europe, which was set up in 2001 on the initiative of Austria, the project “Meilensteine vor dem Sturm” (milestones before the storm), commemorating the 100th anniversary of the outbreak of the First World War, was implemented under Austrian chairmanship in Sarajevo in May. An exhibition, a film, a presentation and two concerts on this topic were presented by the participating Platform countries. In November, “Hot and Cold”, a joint glass and porcelain exhibition was organised under Czech Platform chairmanship in Baku in November.

The translation programme Traduki is dedicated to the geographic priority Western Balkans region. The programme was launched in 2008 by the MFA, KulturKontakt Austria, the Swiss culture foundation Pro Helvetia, the German Foreign Office, the Goethe-Institute and the S. Fischer Foundation. Further programme partners include the Slovenian book agency JAK, the Ministry for Culture of the Republic of Croatia, the Department for Cultural Affairs of the government of the Principality of Liechtenstein, the Kulturstiftung Liechtenstein (Liechtenstein Cultural Foundation), the Ministry for Culture of the Republic of Albania, the Ministry for Culture and Innovation of the Republic of Serbia and the Ministry for Culture of the Republic of Romania. The network currently consists of 14 participating countries (Albania, Austria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Germany, Kosovo, Liechtenstein, Macedonia, Montenegro, Romania, Serbia, Switzerland and Slovenia). This translation programme for fiction and non-fiction books as well as for children’s and adolescents’ books promotes exchange between the countries participating in the programme. This includes encounters between authors, translators, critics, academics and librarians as well as translations. With some 700 translated books by the end of the year, new partners and new members as well as an increasing number of exchange visits, Traduki has established a successful track record. With literature as a common bond, it has, over the last few years, succeeded in building bridges between people and nations.

The “Talking about Borders” drama competition, organised since 2006 by the MFA in cooperation with the Austrian P.E.N. Club and the stage director Christian Papke in the Western Balkan, Danube and Black Sea countries was concluded on the part of the FMEI with the competition in Georgia 2013/2014. The competition will be continued as an international project of the Staatstheater Nürnberg. At the competition in Georgia, the jury for the first time awarded three prizes. Donated by the MFA and the Georgian Ministry of Culture two first prizes and one third prize were awarded. The winners of the two first prizes were David Tavadze for the play “War Mother” and
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Vasil Janikashvili for the play “Angry Birds”. The third prize was awarded to Lasha Bugadze for the play “Der 26. Mai” (the 26th of May).

On 28 February and 1 March, the 12th sequel of the short festival series “Die Besten aus dem Osten!” (the best from the East) was shown in the Volkstheater Dependance Hundsturm. In the context of this initiative launched by the MFA in cooperation with the Volkstheater Wien in 2007, theatre avantgarde from Eastern and Central Europe is presented. This year’s theatre and literary exploratory tour took viewers to Albania; the guests included Joachim Röhm, a renowned translator, Fatos Kongoli, a popular author and co-founder of the Albanian democracy movement, the “Teatri i Metropolit Tirana” and the “Off-Production Tirana”. A scenic reading of Albanian play “Der Sandmann” (the sandman) by Jonila Godole, the winner of the “Über Grenzen sprechen” (Talking about Borders) competition in 2009, was performed by actors from the Volkstheater.

Between 2011 and 2014, the SPACES project, co-funded by the MFA since 2011, focused on the topic of public space as a venue for dealing with civil society concerns in Armenia, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine. In the context of a final conference held in October, the publication outlining the results of this three-year forum was presented in Vienna.

The year 2014 was marked by the commemoration of the centennial of the outbreak of the First World War. Commissioned by the MFA and five other ministries, a group of renowned Austrian historians had elaborated a key issues document that outlines basic principles of an Austrian approach to the First World War (including the issue of war guilt) and also serves as a basis for information for the representatives of Austria abroad. The Austrian representation authorities and Cultural Fora organised and hosted more than 120 events focusing on this issue. Apart from scientific conferences and presentations, a broad range of events were organised in various art disciplines. On the 100th anniversary of the assassination in Sarajevo, the Vienna Philharmonic orchestra gave a concert in the old town hall of Sarajevo. The MFA supported public viewing of the concert in various public locations in Sarajevo. The travelling exhibition “Das Jahr 1914 – Bewegte Ruhe vor dem Sturm” (the year 2014 – (The Eventful Lull Before the Storm) successfully toured Romania, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Poland, Hungary, Iran, Croatia as well as Bosnia and Herzegovina.

On the priority topic of 25 years since the fall of Iron Curtain, a cross-border commemorative event under the heading of “Freedom for Europe: 25th anniversary of the Fall of the Iron Curtain. A celebration of Freedom and Youth” directed at young people from Austria, Hungary and Slovakia was held at the invitation of Federal Minister Sebastian Kurz in June. The event was attended by Federal Minister Kurz, the Slovakian Foreign Minister Miroslav Lajčák, the Hungarian State Secretary for Trade and Foreign Affairs Péter Szijjártó, about 80 young people from Austria, Slovakia and Hungary as well as by representatives of the diplomatic corps. In August, the Diplo-
matic Academy of Vienna was the venue of an international scientific colloquy on the “Pan-European Picnic”, organised by the MFA and the Ludwig Boltzmann Institute for Research on the Consequences of War. Experts and contemporary witnesses from Austria, Hungary, Germany and Slovakia discussed the current status of research and the historical interpretation of this event and/or the opening of the Iron Curtain between Hungary and Austria at the time. The FEIA also supported and co-funded further events and publications dealing with the topic of “25 years since the fall of the Iron Curtain”.

By providing a broad-based cultural programme, Austria made a valuable contribution to the European capitals of culture Umeå and Riga. Under the heading of “Curiosity and Passion – the Art of Co-Creation” organised in the context of Umeå 2014, the Austrian embassy in Stockholm co-funded projects in the fields of music, literature and architecture. The Linz-based Ars Electronica Futurelab represented Austria at the opening celebration.

Austria also contributed to the large number of cultural events organised under the motto of “Force Majeure” in the context of the European capital of culture year “RIGA2014”. Together with the Austrian National Library, the Latvian National Library organised a large exhibition under the heading of “Book 1514–2014”, which was opened in the presence of Federal President Heinz Fischer and the Latvian President Andris Berzins in July. The exhibition “Fields” presented some 40 works of art, accompanied by presentation, opening performances, film screenings and further artistic interventions.

In the context of the “Austrian-Russian Cultural Seasons 2013–2015”, a total of 50 Austrian projects were realised in 17 Russian cities between May 2013 and December 2014. The programme’s highlights included exhibitions by the Wiener Albertina and the Esterházy private collection, projects by Ars Electronica and the sound:frame festival, an exhibition on the first Soviet nuclear ice breaker “Lenin” as well as guest performances by the Burgtheater and the Wiener Schauspielhaus. In return, a Russian cultural season will be organised in Austria in 2014 and 2015.

The exhibition Lenin:Eisbrecher did not only mark a first successful project of contemporary art on a prestige object of the Soviet Union, the icebreaker Lenin, but with 14,000 visitors it was at the same time the most successful exhibition of the recent past in the largest city north of the polar circle. The exhibition “Jenseits des Sehens” (beyond seeing) put together by the monastery of Admont, was the first exhibition ever in the Russian capital that was accessible to both blind and sighted visitors.

The MFA’s travelling exhibition “mitgebracht - aus Italien bis China” (“Salzburg in the World – Brought along”) designed in cooperation with the Province of Salzburg and showing works from young artists who participated in the atelier exchange programme of the Province of Salzburg, was very successfully shown in the Austrian Cultural Forum Budapest, in France and in Albania. In Tirana, the exhibition was opened in May by the Governor of the
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Province of Salzburg Wilfried Haslauer in the presence of the Albanian Minister of Culture. In the context of the opening of the exhibition in the „Cité internationale des Arts“, Ambassador Ursula Plassnik awarded the Austrian Cross of Honour for Science and Arts to the founder of the Cité, Simone F. Brunau.

As part of the European Jewish Identity Project, the photographic exhibition “Jude Sein/Being Jewish“, curated by Peter Rigaud for the Jewish Museum Vienna, was shown – co-funded by the Future Fund of the Republic of Austria – in Milan, Berlin, Prague and under the auspices of the Greek Presidency of the Council of the European Union in Athens.

The travelling architectural exhibition “Getting things done: Evolution of the built environment in Vorarlberg” by the MFA and the Province of Vorarlberg was opened in September in the “Werkraum Bregenzerwald” in Andelsbuch by Province Governor Markus Wallner and Province Councillor Harald Sonderegger and subsequently successfully presented for the first time abroad together with the Austrian Cultural Forum Madrid at the Colegio de Arquitectos de Burgos.

Celebrating the 25th anniversary of the opening of the Austro-Hungarian border in 1989, the MFA’s video/photo exhibition “Woher kommst du?” (Where are you from?) by Barbara Zeidler was shown at the Austrian Cultural Forum Budapest. The exhibition was opened by the Hungarian Minister for Administration and Justice, Tibor Navracsics. In cooperation with partners from the EUNIC Cluster Teheran the exhibition was opened on the day commemorating the fall of the Berlin Wall at the Austrian Cultural Forum Teheran and presented on Europe Day 2014 at the University of Fribourg.

The “freiraum quartier21 INTERNATIONAL”, a successful cooperation between the MFA and the MuseumsQuartier in Vienna launched in 2009, was continued with the international exhibitions “Places of Transition”, “Connecting Sound Etc. Cable Works, Cable Sounds, Cables Everywhere”, “PCFS – Post Colonial Flagship Store”.

The goal pursued in the field of music is to present Austria, “the country of music” in all its facets in an innovative and dynamic manner abroad. Thus support for Austrian music of the 20th and 21st centuries continues to be a strong feature of cultural programmes. The network of Austrian international culture supports musical performances that cover the whole range from classical to jazz, pop, contemporary and world music as well as experimental approaches (electronic, sound installations). Support was especially provided to musicians that had been selected for “The New Austrian Sound of Music (NASOM)” support programme for young Austrian soloists and ensembles, initiated in 2002.

Authors’ readings made up the major part of the activities in the field of literature, with the following authors featuring in the literature promotion programme “schreibART AUSTRIA” playing a most active role: Xaver Bayer,
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In the theatrical arena there was again a broad range of performances at international festivals and theatres abroad that were supported by international cultural policy. This included classical theatrical forms such as scenic readings and performances of plays by Austrian playwrights as well as more specific and experimental genres. Alongside renowned mid-sized theatre companies such as Schauspielhaus Wien and Garage X, a number of independent groups (teatro caprile), object theatre groups (Schubert Theater, Karin Schäfer Figurentheater), street theatre groups (Irrwisch), performance ensembles (God’s Entertainment, Superamas) and experimental improvisation and performance groups (Ad Hoc Theater, Verein Cocon) gave guest performances abroad.

In the focus area of dance, performances by choreographers, dancers and dance companies from Austria were supported at festivals and workshops abroad. The innovative funding programme INTPA (Internationales Netz fur Tanz und Performance Austria, international network for dance and performance Austria), a cooperation between TanzQuartier Wien, the Federal Chancellery and the MFA, played a major role in this respect. Thus in particular Maria Anwander, Walter Baco, Gina Battistich, Editta Braun Company, CielLaroque, Willi Dorner, tanz company gervasi, Chris Haring, An Kaler, Tamara Kronheim, KUK, Aline Kristin Mohl, the Salzburger Landestheater-Ballett, Jasmin Schaitl, Christian Ubl, Rosalie Wankl and Tom Zabel performed abroad.

In the field of film, support was provided to facilitate the participation of Austrian films in European and international festivals and a number of Aus-
Bilateral Agreements in the Fields of Culture and Science

Austrian film weeks or film days were initiated by the Austrian representation authorities and Cultural Fora. Due to the ongoing high level of interest since it was launched in 2011, the cooperation with Ars Electronica Linz in the field of animation film was continued and so far events have been organised in 29 countries. Likewise, the cooperation with Österreichische Akademie des Films (Austrian Academy of Film) was continued in the short film area. Since 2013, selected short films have been presented as “Österreichische Kurzfilmschau” (Austrian short film series) at embassies and Cultural Fora abroad. With by now 86 presentations in 18 different countries, the “Österreichische Kurzfilmschau” managed to provide both a platform for focussed presentation of Austria as a whole and individual events for presenting the work of young Austrian filmmakers. The involvement of Austria lecturers abroad in the “Österreichische Kurzfilmschau” programme, meant that the short films were shown to a wider audience in the school and university sectors and met with an excellent response. Due to this very positive feedback, the cooperation will be continued next year. In collaboration with the international film festival “Tricky Women” in Vienna – the only film festival worldwide exclusively dedicated to animation films produced by women – a number of selected animation films by female Austrian filmmakers were presented in 11 countries. This programme aims to enhance the gender balance in the area of film by taking and encouraging steps towards the realisation of this objective.

Austria has been a member of the Council of Europe’s Enlarged Partial Agreement on European Cultural Routes since 2010. The EC, the CoR, the EP and the Member States agreed to intensify the promotion of the European Cultural Routes as well as their sustainable development and focus on quality in order to strengthen the competitiveness of the tourism industry.

In April, the Via Habsburg was awarded the certificate for European Cultural Routes by the CoE. The distinction was officially handed over on 29 September in the Hofburg in Innsbruck. Alongside the Mozart Route, the Transromanica and the European Cemeteries Route, the Via Habsburg is the fourth certified cultural route leading through Austria.

14.2. Bilateral Agreements in the Fields of Culture and Science

The cultural work programme prepared during the Austrian-Romanian cultural negotiations in Bucharest at the end of September 2013, was signed by Federal Minister Sebastian Kurz and Foreign Minister Titus Corlățean in the margins of the EU Foreign Affairs Council meeting in Brussels on 10 February.

On 23 and 24 April, the first Austrian-Albanian Joint Commission for Scientific-Technical Cooperation met in Tirana. The Commission adopted its first joint work programme and agreed on implementing a call for project propos-
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als from the end of May to the end of September. The agreed joint selection meeting was held in Vienna on 5 December. For the next two years, a total of ten cooperation projects, including scientific environmental projects, were selected.

In the presence of the Speaker of the Knesset, Yuli-Yoel Edelstein, Federal Minister Reinhold Mitterlehner and the Ambassador of Israel Zvi Heifetz signed an agreement on the coproduction of films between Austria and Israel on 1 October.

The Austrian-Turkish Cultural Consultations were held for the sixth time in Vienna on 9 October.

At the 13th meeting of the Austrian-Hungarian Cultural Commission, held in Budapest on 1 December, a new cultural work programme was adopted for the years 2015–2017. In addition to a large number of joint activities in the fields of education, language, culture, art, youth and sports it for the first time also covers cooperation on women’s affairs and equality, providing in particular for the exchange of experts in the area of violence against women. Furthermore, it was agreed to continue the successful “Aktion Österreich-Ungarn, Wissenschafts- und Erziehungskooperation” (Action Austria-Hungary, Cooperation in the fields of Science and Education) for the period 2015–2017 and its new work programme. The goal is to promote and expand the exchange of students, graduates, scientists and teaching staff at universities, high schools and courses at universities of applied sciences as well as to facilitate and promote the implementation of further joint scientific and scientific-technological educational programmes.

On 10 December, the Austrian-Montenegrin Joint Commission for Scientific-Technical Cooperation met in Podgorica. The commission adopted the work programme for the years 2015–2016 and selected a total of eight scientific cooperation projects.

Cultural Agreements are valuable instruments in sharing culture across borders and at international level. Hence the large interest in concluding new bilateral cultural agreements. Currently, negotiations are being held with Brazil, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo and Ukraine. Negotiations on a new cultural agreement with Bulgaria were concluded in just under two years.

The objective pursued by scientific-technical and/or technological agreements is the support and promotion of joint research projects. In order to prepare the ground for such international research projects, negotiations on concluding such bilateral scientific-technological agreements are currently being held with Brazil as well as with Bosnia and Herzegovina.

14.3. Austria Libraries

Over the last 20 years, the Austria Libraries (Österreich-Bibliotheken) abroad have evolved into well-established platforms of inter-cultural dialogue. Set
Austria Libraries

up in 1989, they have made a special contribution to overcoming the intellectual and mentality-related division of Europe into East and West. Austria Libraries are primarily located in Central, Eastern and South-East Europe, the Caucasus, the Black Sea region and Central Asia.

Institutionally linked to universities and national libraries, the Austria Libraries are popular among students and teaching staff with a scientific focus and are also used by interested members of the public. Alongside their role as Austria’s scientific satellites abroad, they are increasingly developing into information and cultural centres that organise cultural and scientific events in cooperation with cultural fora and embassies. Being an indispensable and integral element of Austrian international cultural policy they provide important and sustainable impetus to fostering the sharing of Austrian culture and philosophy in all its diversity abroad that also goes beyond the Central European scope. The network of Austria Libraries abroad currently consists of 64 libraries in 28 countries. Besides providing traditional library services, the Austria Libraries organise some 1,000 events that attract more than 130,000 visitors every year. In 2014, more than 135,000 individuals used the Austria Libraries whose stocks were increased and comprise some 411,000 books, more than 5,500 audio items, 2,414 CD-ROMs and 5,070 DVDs. All Austria Libraries have W-Lan.

Accessible via the Austria Libraries’ web portal (www.oesterreich-bibliotheken.at), the database of Austrian literature already includes more than 20,133 foreign language translations of Austrian literature (international austrica) including those accessible via databases in Japan, Russia and Italy. The translations produced in the context of Austria Libraries frequently win translation awards sponsored by the Federal Chancellery and often receive distinctions in the respective host countries.

The Austria Libraries at the Departments for German Studies abroad are often managed by lecturers of the Austrian Agency for International Cooperation in Education and Research (Österreichischer Austauschdienst, OeAD), who are highly valued by the heads of Austria Libraries as competent networkers in matters relating to Austrian cultural, educational and scientific activities. Facilities which house Austria Libraries also award the Austrian German Language Diploma (Österreichisches Sprachdiplom Deutsch, ÖSD) and conduct the relevant exams.

In a long-standing cooperation with the “culture and language” department at the Federal Ministry of Education and Research, Austria Days were organised at selected locations abroad. These events, which were conducted in close cooperation with local institutions, focus on topics specifically related to Austria. The “Culture and language” department and the local cooperation partners are jointly responsible for programme design and organisation. These short seminars also serve to provide in-service training opportunities for German teachers abroad.
Austria Libraries organise cultural events, teach languages and contribute towards facilitating the diverse cultural and scientific relations in both the bilateral and the multilateral context. The MFA attaches great importance to promoting networking among Austria Libraries, which is fostered by regular meetings.

Since 2009, publications produced in the context of the Austria Libraries network have been published in the series on “Transkulturelle Forschungen an den Österreich-Bibliotheken im Ausland” (trans-cultural research at Austria Libraries abroad) by the LIT publishing company. A board composed of renowned Austrian editors supervises this series of scientific works published by the Austria Libraries; volume 10 published under this series is “Bianca Bican (Cluj-Napoca/Klausenburg): Deutschsprachige kulturelle Presse Transsilvaniens. Einblicke in die zweite Hälfte des 19. Jahrhunderts und in die Zwischenkriegszeit“. (German-language cultural press in Transylvania. Insights into the second half of the 19th century and the period between the two world wars).

In the series of publications edited by Rudolf Agstner (Vienna) and entitled “Forschungen zur Geschichte des österreichischen Auswärtigen Dienstes” (research on the history of the Austrian Foreign Service), (LIT publishing company) volume 9 entitled “‘Die Hitze ist hier wieder kolossal...‘ Des Kaisers Diplomaten und Konsuln auf Reisen. Reiseschilderungen 1808 – 1918” and volume 10 on “1915/1916 – Das etwas andere Lesebuch zum 1. Weltkrieg. Heinrich Wildner: Tagebuch”, were published.

This year the Austria Libraries again contributed to the campaign “Österreich liest. Treffpunkt Bibliothek” (Austria reads. Meeting point library), which attracted more than half a million visitors in Austria and abroad – and is also very popular and highly appreciated by co-organisers.

In September, their fourth cross-border trip led heads, staff and scientific advisors from Austria Libraries abroad to České Budějovice (Budweis) and Brno (Brünn) and the Austria Libraries located there as well as to the Austrian Cultural Forum in Prague where they participated in symposia on the topic of “Frieden und Krieg im mitteleuropäischen Raum. Historisches Gedächtnis und literarische Reflexion” (war and peace in the Central European region. Historical memory and literary reflection) organised in cooperation with the Charles University in Prague. These scientific meetings provided participants with the opportunity to deal with the cultural area of the countries that belonged to the Bohemian Crown. The trip also focuses on commemorating the outbreak of the First World War one hundred years ago.

Gala events, symposia, series of lectures, exhibitions and concerts were organised in connection with the 20th anniversary of the establishment of Austria Libraries, inter alia of the Austria Library in Vilnius.

The opening of the 63rd Austria Library at the J. E. Purkyně University in Ústí nad Labem (Aussig an der Elbe) on 3 April by the Mayor of Vienna
Michael Häupl strengthened Austria’s cultural presence in the Czech Republic. The Library has been established in line with a long-standing request by the Chair of German Studies at the university. The valuable extension of the university’s holdings of Austriaca was possible thanks to a generous donation by the Österreichisch-Tschechische Gesellschaft.

In the presence of the head of Cultural Policy Department at the MFA, Martin Eichtinger, the library of the Austrian Cultural Forum Budapest at the Andrássy University Budapest was integrated into the network of Austrian Libraries abroad on 11 November. As the 64th Austria Library it was named György Sebestyén Library in honour of the novelist, editor of literary magazines and visionary of intellectual Central Europe. Both thematically and scientifically it cooperates closely with the department for German language and literature at the Eötvös Loránd University (ELTE).

Book donations were made to Austria Libraries abroad and to German language and social science institutes at universities around the world with a particular focus on Austrian humanities, inter alia in Brazil, Chile, Finland, Israel, Poland and South Africa.

14.4. Science, Education and Language

14.4.1. Austria Professorships and Centres of Austrian Studies Abroad

Established at universities mainly in Europe, the USA and Israel, these facilities strive to initiate, deepen and coordinate the study of topics specifically related to Austria and Europe in the respective host country’s academic life and to stimulate academic research in this subject area as well as encourage publication of the relevant findings. Regular collaboration with embassies, consulates general and Cultural Fora contributes substantially towards enabling chairs and centres for Austrian studies to fulfil their tasks.

14.4.2. Scholarships and Mobility Programmes in the University Field

The OeAD-GmbH provides services to scholarship and grant holders and administers the various mobility programmes such as Erasmus+, bilateral grant programmes, Austrian Development Cooperation programmes and scientific and technical cooperation programmes. In implementing these tasks, the OeAD-GmbH acts as the partner of the MFA, which is in turn responsible for relevant coordination and information sharing activities involving Austrian representations abroad and foreign representations in Austria.
14.4.3. Offices of Science and Technology Austria (OSTA)

The Offices of Science and Technology Austria (OSTA) in Washington D.C. and in Beijing market Austria as a technology location and are the prime contact for maintaining and expanding relations between Austria and the USA, Canada, and China in the field of research and technology development. The OSTAs were designed as strategic interfaces and hubs for the exchange of information in the fields of science, research, tertiary education and technology policy. They cooperate closely with Austrian ministries and research institutions as well as with their associated research, science and technology organisations such as the Austrian Institute of Technology, the Österreichische Forschungsförderungsgesellschaft (Austrian Research Promotion Agency), Austria Wirtschaftsservice (the Austrian federal promotional bank), Wissenschaftsfonds (the Austrian Science Fund), Österreichischer Austauschdienst (Austrian Agency for International Cooperation in Education and Research), AustriaTech and the international offices of the Austrian Economic Chamber.

14.4.4. Language

The Österreich Institut G.m.b.H. (Austria Institute Ltd.) organises German language courses, supports and promotes German language instruction abroad, and cooperates with national and international organisations. It was founded in 1997 to further develop German courses on an independent basis. These courses, which are an important element of Austria’s international cultural policy, had previously been offered at the Austrian Cultural Institutes. Based in Vienna, the organisation maintains institutes in Belgrade, Bratislava, Brno, Budapest, Kraków, Rome, Warsaw and Wroclaw. All of the Österreich Institut facilities see themselves as centres for the promotion of the study and cultivation of the German language as it is written and spoken in Austria.

14.4.5. Educational Networks and Austrian Schools Abroad

Currently there are eight Auslandsschulen (Austrian Schools Abroad): two in Budapest and one each in Prague, Istanbul, Guatemala City, Shkodra, Querétaro and Liechtenstein. These schools were created based on historical, economic policy and cultural policy considerations. Lessons at these schools are based on the Austrian curriculum in combination with relevant adaptations to the respective host country.

Project work by the officer for cooperation in the field of education at the Federal Ministry for Education, Arts and Culture helps to ensure relevant reforms are supported in East and South East Europe.
14.5. Multilateral Scientific and Technical Cooperation

Austria has continued to place a special focus on multilateral scientific and technical cooperation both inside and outside of Europe in order to strengthen its position as a location for high-tech industry and research. Austria thus participates in numerous programmes including the European Cooperation in the Field of Scientific and Technical Research (COST) in Brussels, the European Organisation for Nuclear Research (CERN) in Geneva, the European Space Agency (ESA) in Paris and the European Organisation for the Exploitation of Meteorological Satellites (EUMETSAT) in Darmstadt. Austria is represented in these organisations by the MFA, the Federal Ministry for Transport, Innovation and Technology and the Federal Ministry of Science and Research. In addition, Austria’s foreign policy interests are also represented through its involvement in the European Molecular Biology Conference (EMBC) in Heidelberg, the International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis (IIASA) in Laxenburg, the European Centre for Medium-Range Weather Forecasts (ECMWF) in Reading (United Kingdom) as well as the European Space Policy Institute (ESPI) in Vienna.

In this context, efforts aimed at fostering the coordination of activities launched by international scientific institutions headquartered in Austria play a particularly important role. Since 1971, Austria has been a member of COST whose 35 member countries (and Israel as a cooperating state) are engaged in scientific and technical cooperation in the field of pre-competitive research with a special focus being placed on natural sciences such as chemistry, nano-sciences and interdisciplinary research. Austria attaches particular importance to promoting third-country participation. Funding is also provided for a dedicated COST Fund, established to enable participation of scientists and researchers from the Western Balkan countries. Austria also contributes to the European Space Agency (ESA), whose convention enables selective participation in ESA programmes with a guaranteed return on investment. Participation in these ESA programmes provides an excellent launch pad for industrial production geared towards commercial applications. Through the ESA, Austria is thus involved in the construction of the European satellite navigation and positioning system GALILEO and in the future European satellite-based Global Monitoring for Environment and Security (GMES) system.


According to Article 167 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU), competence for cultural policy lies exclusively with the Member States. The EU is only assigned a supportive and coordinating role in order to promote cooperation among Member States in this field.
Culture as a central element in EU external relations was recognised for the first time in the Cultural Agenda 2007. The promotion of cultural diversity as well as intercultural dialogue are enshrined as priorities in this document. Ever since, Austria has repeatedly, and especially in the context of negotiations on the EU Work Plan for Culture (2015–2018) held over the last few months, advocated the strategic inclusion of culture in the Union’s external relations. Under the Preparatory Action on Culture in the EU’s External Relations, commissioned by the EU, which was completed in summer, a survey was conducted in 54 countries and final report prepared on the potential for European cultural policy in third countries.

In keeping with the dual role of culture in the EU, Austria contributes with its international cultural policy activities to EU cultural initiatives that strengthen a common EU awareness. The Austrian representations abroad cooperate closely and on a regular basis with the representations of other EU Member States and EU delegations.

Of the 31 Austrian Cultural Fora, 14 are active in the EU and the same holds true for 38 of the 62 Austria Libraries and for seven of the eight Austria Institutes worldwide. Within the European Union, they work pro-actively towards promoting cultural exchange, European multi-lingualism, and especially the German language as it is spoken and written in Austria. They also foster career opportunities of Austrian artists on the European arts and culture market, which is of particular importance to such artists.

The network of European National Institutes for Culture (EUNIC) is another form of cooperation at a cultural level. Founded in 2006 as an informal network, it was constituted as an association with relevant articles in 2011. Currently, 33 Institutes for Culture belong to EUNIC. Worldwide, more than 94 EUNIC clusters have formed as cooperation networks between local EU cultural institutes. Four of these clusters are chaired by the heads of Austrian Cultural Fora and/or embassies. In August, the EUNIC network succeeded in winning the bid for the project “Crossroads for Culture” under the EU’s Creative Europe Programme.

14.7. Intercultural and Interreligious Dialogue

Religious intolerance, radicalisation and fundamental extremism seem to dominate an increasing number of conflicts which are waged with great brutality. Against this background, Austria is stepping up its efforts towards promoting the values of tolerance and coexistence within and among the various different religions and takes clear measures to counter exclusion, extremism, incitement and propagation of hatred and violence. Since the 1980s, Austria has successfully conducted the dialogue among and with the large world religions. Over the years, the tools for dialogue have continuously been further developed. The strategies pursued by the MFA in the context of these dialogues span the spectrum from migration to integration including the cen-
central political challenges of democracy, the rule of law, respect of fundamental rights and freedoms as well as promotion of societal and cultural diversity. This makes dialogue an important tool for diversity management and sustainable prevention and resolution of conflicts.

Austria is thus interested in a comprehensive dialogue with Islam, especially the development of an Islam of a European notion. To this end, the experiences on the Western Balkans are especially valuable. The scientific programme with the Western Balkan countries is thus continued in an ongoing manner. In dialogues with predominantly Muslim societies, particularly in Asia, the Arab world and Turkey, special attention is paid to a greater involvement of women, their direct participation in societal and political life as well as the inclusion of young people in dialogue.

At multilateral level, the MFA took part in the 6th Global Forum of the United Nations Alliance of Civilisations (UNAOC), held in Bali from 29 to 30 August and focusing on “Unity in Diversity: Celebrating Diversity for Common and Shared Values”.

For the fifth time, applied geography and culture training events for imams (5 to 10 April) and voluntary women’s representatives were organised in Austrian mosque associations (26 September to 3 October) and advanced training sessions held. These seminars were organised in cooperation with the Islamic Faith Community in Austria, whose President Fuat Sanac participated in the closing event and the diploma award ceremony on 5 December.

The International King Abdullah Bin Abdulaziz International Centre for Interreligious and Intercultural Dialogue (KAICIID), which opened in 2012 in Vienna dealt specifically with the problem of violence in the name of religion. The centre for dialogue contributed its expert knowledge to finding solutions to the conflict in the Central African Republic and from 18 to 19 November organised a symposium on the topic of abuse of religion by terrorist groups in Syria and Iraq.

The centre aims to provide a permanent platform for dialogue among representatives of religious communities and philosophies. It strives to develop and/or support communication, understanding and concrete cooperation between people of different cultural and religious background and affiliation by hosting and organising conferences, seminars and further training projects. The centre is committed to the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights and to the promotion and respect of fundamental rights and freedoms.

14.8. International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) and Issues related to the National Socialist Past

The International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA), an international Institution with a Permanent Secretariat based in Berlin, was set up in 1998
on the initiative of Sweden under the name of Task Force for International Cooperation on Holocaust Education, Remembrance and Research (ITF).

It was established with the purpose of becoming an international network promoting Holocaust education, remembrance and research at national and international level. In accomplishing its tasks it is able to draw on the support of renowned international scientific experts. By establishing its committee on countering anti-Semitism and Holocaust denial and by placing an additional focus on Roma, the ITF has responded to current developments.

Influential diplomacy used by both the Chair and the ITF31 Member States is playing an increasingly important role in countering revisionism.

Admitted in 2001, Austria held the ITF Chair in the commemorative year of 2008 and has since been one of the central players within the Alliance. The Austrian delegation is co-headed by the MFA and the National Fund of the Republic of Austria. Austrian government representatives as well as experts from the Austrian Academy of Sciences, the National Fund of the Republic of Austria, the Documentation Centre of Austrian Resistance, the organisation “_erinnern.at_” as well as the association “Gedenkdienst” participate in the permanent working groups. Projects launched by Austria in the fields of Holocaust education, awareness-raising and research are highly regarded within the IHRA.

**14.9. The Future Fund of the Republic of Austria**

The Future Fund of the Republic of Austria was set up at the end of 2005 as a diminishing fund assuming the residual funds of the Fund for Reconciliation, Peace and Cooperation (Reconciliation Fund) that had been established in 2000 and was closed on 31 December 2005. The fund’s mandate covers the promotion of projects and academic work which serve the remembrance of the victims of the Nazi regime, as a reminder of the threat posed by totalitarian systems and dictatorships as well as international cooperation and promote the respect of human rights and mutual tolerance in these areas. The Fund’s mandate to administer the residual funds and final settlement of the remaining payments expired at the end of 2010.

The MFA provides technical and administrative support to the Future Fund. In a large number of the international projects supported by the Fund, the MFA and its respective diplomatic representations cooperate closely with the Fund. Such projects include, for example, the re-design of the exhibition at the Austrian memorial site in the former concentration camp Auschwitz-Birkenau, the education initiative on Holocaust and genocide prevention launched by the Salzburg Global Seminar and in the context of the Intercultural Achievement Award (IAA), awarded for the first time in 2014. In the reporting period, cooperation also included training courses for master degree students from Israel, Palestine and Jordan that were organised by the Diplomatic Academy. The “workshop talks”, organised in cooperation with the Diplomatic Academy to present selected projects funded by the Future Fund, were continued.
15. Integration

15.1. Introduction

The entry into force of the amendment to the Federal Ministries Act 2014 on 1 March 2014 meant that the topic of integration of persons with a migration background was for the first time included into the Federal Ministries Act and added to the MFA’s scope of responsibilities.

15.2. Targets and the Key to successful Integration

The National Action Plan for Integration (NAP.I) prepared in 2009 by the Federal Government and involving all key stakeholders was adopted in 2010. It focuses on integration through participation in economic, social, political and cultural processes as well as compliance with the relevant obligations and contains a comprehensive catalogue of general integration-policy guidelines, challenges and goals. The NAP.I consists of seven fields of action: language and education, work and employment, rule of law and values, health and social issues, intercultural dialogue, sports and leisure, housing and the regional dimension of integration, each with clearly defined challenges, principles and goals (see Chapter 15.4.).

The target group, the National Action Plan for Integration is directed at, is society at large, foreign nationals who have settled permanently in Austria, Austrian citizens who were born abroad, as well as persons with a migration background who have settled permanently in Austria and/or who hold Austrian citizenship but whose parents were born abroad.

In this connection, the new approach “integration based on performance” means that people must not be judged based on their background, colour of skin or religion but based on what they want to contribute to Austria. The state thus has to call for this performance, facilitate and recognise it. A key element in this context is the clear sharing of Austrian values – as these values and proficiency in the German language form the foundations of our coexistence in Austria. At the same time it is necessary to create the appropriate framework conditions for integration – because integration is a reciprocal process which contributes to dismantling prejudice among the majority population while at the same time motivating immigrants, inspiring them with confidence that they will be able to achieve their individual goals in Austria.

15.2.1. Work Programme of the Federal Government 2013–2018

Integration was firmly enshrined in the Federal Government’s work programme for the current term. Special importance is being attached to issues such as the recognition of qualifications acquired abroad, qualified immigration and
a culture of making migrants feel welcome, as well as improved promotion of German language skills – and which are already being implemented.

15.3. Integration Bodies

15.3.1. Advisory Board on Integration

The Advisory Board on Integration, which is enshrined in Article 18 of the Settlement and Residence Act (Niederlassungs- und Aufenthaltsgesetzes, NAG), is composed of representatives of the Federal Government, the federal provinces, social partners, stakeholders and NGOs. The Advisory Board meets twice a year for interdisciplinary exchange and coordination across the respective areas of responsibility. It thus takes account of the fact that integration is a cross-cutting theme affecting many different public players. Discussions focus on progress made and implementation of the targets defined in the National Action Plan for Integration. The topics addressed in 2014 included “50th anniversary of the signing of the bilateral labour recruitment agreement Austria – Turkey”, diversity in public administration as well as prevention of and measures against radicalisation.

The integration measures and projects presented by the Advisory Board members are included in the annual Integration Report and saved in the online database “Integrationsprojekte in Österreich” (integration projects in Austria), which is available at www.bmeia.gv.at/integration/datenbank-integrationsprojekte/.

15.3.2. Expert Council for Integration

The independent Expert Council for Integration is composed of 16 experts including both academics and practitioners and is chaired by Professor Heinz Faßmann. The Council, which was initially made up of 14 experts, was expanded in spring in order to take account of the developments in the field of the strategy “Integration from the Beginning” (see Chapter 15.4.1.). The Council is the competence centre for integration issues and advises on questions and challenges related to the process of integration. In 2014, it convened for a total of eight meetings. One of the Expert Council’s main tasks is the preparation of the annual Integration Report. The 2014 report includes a special focus on recommendations for action relating to the integration projects set out in the current Government Programme.

15.4. A Review of the Thematic Priorities 2014

15.4.1. Integration from the Beginning

An early start to the integration process, if possible still in the country of origin, is pivotal to successful integration. With a view to successfully manag-
ing and supervising this process, the first integration officer was dispatched to the Austrian embassy in Ankara in 2013. Initially devised as a pilot project, this concept proved so successful that the model was also applied to Serbia where an integration officer has since October provided information and counselling to those planning to immigrate to Austria. In the context of these measures there is intensive coordination with the Austrian Integration Fund (AIF) and the Austria Institutes. The Austrian approach to pre-integration measures is regarded as a best practice model across Europe.

Also important for integration in Austria is a culture of making immigrants feel welcome. With a view to enshrining a positive and appreciative attitude also among Austrian institutions, starting with settlement and residence authorities, the MFA launched a comprehensive process with Lower Austria and Styria as pilot provinces. In this context, approaches were developed for establishing such a ‘welcome culture’ within public authorities, and making it part of day-to-day practice.

**15.4.2. Language and Education**

The objective pursued by the agreement concluded in 2012 between the Federal Government and the federal provinces under Article 15a of the Federal Constitutional Act was, for the period from 2012 to 2014, to support three to six year old children attending an institutional child care facility in such a way that enables them to attain the best possible command of German as the language of instruction by the time they start primary school (Art.1). In this context, a special focus was placed on supporting children who are non-native speakers of German.

For the implementation of this agreement, the Federal Government made available a total of 15 million euros to the federal provinces – provided the latter double this share made available by the federal level and likewise invest a total of 15 million euros into early language support/tuition in institutional child care facilities in the period 2012–2014.

The funding thus made available was specifically invested in additional linguistic support staff, such as peripatetic language advisers, and in conducting language proficiency assessments, based on which targeted and individualised early language tuition for children who require support was provided. Special teaching material, for setting up a digital library for children’s books for instance, was also acquired and further teacher training activities with a special focus on early language support for children who are non-native German speakers were financed.

Following the entry into force of the agreement, language proficiency assessments were conducted in the years 2012 to 2014 for approximately 188,300 children attending institutional child care facilities. In this context, some 66,000 children were found to be in need of language learning support ser-
**Integration**

**vices.** With a view to measuring the success of this agreement, a key performance indicator was ascertained, which is calculated based on the difference between the number of children for whom linguistic support needs have been established, minus the number of children who still require support after having received early language tuition. This key performance indicator is currently being evaluated and will be published together with the final evaluation report 2014, which is to be completed at the beginning of 2016.

In order to be able to cover the continuous need for additional early language support, negotiations on the extension of the agreement under Art 15a Federal Constitutional Act on early language support at institutional child care facilities were launched with the federal provinces in summer. The extension of the agreement covers an increase of federal funding of currently 5 million euros to 20 million euros per year. This additional funding is to be used to further intensify early language support and tuition, to enable the enhanced implementation of target-group specific projects, hire even more language support staff and provide specific targeted and individualised support to children in further consolidating their proficiency in German as the language of instruction. This additional funding furthermore enables conducting language proficiency assessments on a larger scale, and – as required – also support the **level of development** of those children who display language support and tuition needs. The extension of this agreement will be applicable as of the beginning of the kindergarten year 2015/16 and will cover the subsequent three kindergarten years.

**15.4.3. Work and Employment**

The increased influx of citizens from other EU Member States to Austria and the associated immigration of skilled workers underlines the importance of the targets defined for this field of action under the NAPI. Participation in the labour market is key to integration, which is why integration policy puts a special focus on further qualification measures, women’s participation in the labour market as well as jobs appropriate to one’s level of education and training.

Some 30 % of persons with a migration background, especially women, are employed in positions for which they are overqualified. Against this background, the focus defined for 2014 was recognition of qualifications acquired abroad in order to strengthen employment of persons with migration background in jobs appropriate to their individual level of education and training. Based on the government programme, which provides for an Austrian recognition law, discussions on such a legal regulation were launched at expert level and coordinated at institutional level, for instance within the “Netzwerk Anerkennung” (Network “Recognition”). As accompanying measures an information campaign was started involving the new edition of the brochure “Anerkennungs-ABC” (the ABC of qualifications recognition) and the related website www.berufsanerkennung.at was relaunched.
The target group of highly skilled persons in general and of international students in particular was highlighted, as Austria requires immigration of highly skilled and qualified workers. Together with the Austrian Economic Chamber, the Federal Ministry of Science, Research and Economy, Universities Austria (UNIKO, Österreichische Universitätenkonferenz), the Austrian Integration Fund (ÖIF, Österreichischer Integrationsfonds) and the Austrian Agency for Education and Research (ÖAD, Österreichischer Austauschdienst), several measures aimed at encouraging university graduates to stay in Austria were discussed at the event “Brain Drain – Brain Gain. Potentiale von internationalen Studierenden für Wirtschaft und Wissenschaft” (potential benefits offered by international students to industry and science) on 5 November and the new manual “Studieren und Arbeiten in Österreich” (studying and working in Austria) was presented. The manual is specifically directed at the target group of international students and provides information on their opportunities in the Austrian labour market, particularly after having graduated from university.

15.4.4. Health and Social Issues

Social security and health are key to successful integration. Against the background of demographic change and increasing diversity within Austria, the relevant target defined in NAP.I was to raise diversity awareness within the healthcare and social systems and thus to guarantee access based on equal opportunity and optimal care for all.

Alongside structural changes, efforts aimed at strengthening migrants’ health literacy are needed at individual level.

With a view to achieving long-term structural changes, integration coordinators were appointed by the Federation of Austrian Social Insurance Institutions as well as by the individual institutions and a dedicated working group was set up. In the context of this cooperation, it was possible to strengthen awareness of immigrants as a target group and stakeholders and to extend programmes at regional level. The MFA is also actively involved in the broad-based nationwide process of establishing framework health goals.

15.4.5. Intercultural Dialogue

The underlying idea of integration is that people of different backgrounds, religions and cultures reach out to one another. Intercultural dialogue as well as its facilitation and promotion lay the groundwork for a successful integration process.

An essential aspect of intercultural dialogue is interreligious exchange, which has been further intensified (see Chapter 14.7.). Particularly in the initial stages of an integration process, religion serves as an important anchor
for many people. Religion, understood as part of the solution and not of the problem, remains an underlying principle. Appreciation for diversity was illustrated especially in the organisation and facilitation of numerous religious meetings (inter alia reception of foreign-language Catholic and Protestant communities, reception on Ramadan and Muharrem and the Rosch Haschana reception).

The draft for a new Islam Law presented by Federal Minister Josef Ostermayer and Federal Minister Sebastian Kurz on 2 October regulates the rights and obligations for the two Islamic religious communities and creates legal security with regard to many interfaces between state and religion. The relevant preparatory work already started in 2012 in the course of the “Dialogforum Islam” (dialogue forum Islam).

The media plays an important role in intercultural dialogue. The goal of integration work is to create incentives to promote informed coverage of integration. The “Journalistenpreis Integration” (journalist award integration) was awarded for the third time in 2014. This media award, with prize money of 10,500 euros, is directed at journalists who deal with the multi-faceted aspects of integration in a differentiated and comprehensive manner. In this context, the focus is not placed on repeating well-known facts but rather on independent approaches taken to this topic.

Furthermore, the integration glossary, which includes integration-relevant terms in an easily understandable manner, was revised. The goal pursued by this service to journalists is to eliminate uncertainties and contribute to avoiding undifferentiated wording.

Contacts with a wide range of migrants’ organisations were continued. On the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the signing of the bilateral labour recruitment agreement between Austria and Turkey, contacts with the Turkish community were intensified. Thus two symposia, whose agendas were coordinated in terms of content, were held in Ankara (15 May) and in Vienna (16 June). Discussions focused mainly on the importance of the bilateral labour recruitment agreement for the economy in Austria, migration from Turkey in the past, the present and in the future, as well as the development of the Turkish community in Austria.

15.4.6. Rule of Law and Values

Reference to common underlying core values that are reflected from a rule of law basis primarily in the Austrian federal constitution and/or are based on it, is a sine qua non for the successful coexistence of all people living in Austria in the long term. Communication, raising awareness of and the protection of these values must be based on a multi-disciplinary approach and correspondingly promoted in a diversified manner.
With a view to raising the attractiveness of Austrian citizenship provided for in the NAP.I, the citizenship test – newly developed in 2013 – was successfully evaluated and improvements were made.

A process that seeks to deal in a differentiated manner with concepts such as home, home country, identity, pride etc. was initiated by hosting a symposium on the topic of “identity” on 10 November. Discussions focused on the role the concept of home and home country played in shaping a person’s identity. The findings will be included in future integration measures. In parallel to the mainly academic consideration of the topic, the social media and media campaign “#stolzdrauf” (proud of it) was launched. Under this common initiative by the MFA and the Austrian Integration Fund, citizens and “Integration Ambassadors” of “Zusammen:Österreich” (Together: Austria) deal with the diverse nature of Austria and explain what it is they as Austrians – with and without a migration background – are proud of.

Against the background of the involvement of foreign terrorist fighters, of which some also came from Austria, in the brutal activities of the terror organisation “Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant” ISIL/Da’esh, since the end of 2013 the focus in the area of integration was also shifted to intensifying prevention and awareness raising activities against radicalisation. In this context, a summit against hatred and agitation, organised by Federal Minister Sebastian Kurz, Federal Minister Johanna Mikl-Leitner and Federal Minister Wolfgang Brandstetter was held in Vienna on 14 October. The one-day conference brought together numerous stakeholders including academics and practitioners who sought to jointly identify and present ways and means for countering trends towards radicalisation – especially in connection with jihadism – in a meaningful manner by taking legal, legislative and most of all preventive action. On 1 December, Federal Minister Sebastian Kurz, Federal Minister Johanna Mikl-Leitner and Federal Minister Sophie Karmasin presented a counselling centre for extremism, which is responsible for crisis intervention and prevention and is located at the Federal Ministry for Family and Youth. In cooperation with the Islamic Religious Community in Austria (Islamische Glaubensgemeinschaft in Österreich, IGGiÖ) and the Austrian Integration Fund, a folder that provides information on the misappropriation of Islam by terrorists was distributed in mosques and mosque associations across Austria.

15.4.7. Sports and Leisure

Leisure and sports provide scope for action which facilitates interaction and social exchange. Common activities undertaken by persons with and without a migration background, inter alia in the context of sports associations, promote integration processes and contribute towards the prevention and/or the dismantling of prejudice.
The annual “Integration Award - Sports” ceremony was for the second time held in the context of the (experts) meeting “Integration bewegt” (integration moves). The thematic priority was placed on public relations work by associations and the use of media and social media in order to reach out to migrants as a (new) target group.

### 15.4.8. Housing and the Regional Dimension of Integration

The importance of the topic of integration in urban and spatial planning policy was already taken account of in the NAP.I under the targets defined under “Housing and the Regional Dimension of Integration”. Immigration and integration processes were identified as important factors for coexistence in Austria. Efforts must therefore be undertaken to avoid social and ethnic segregation in municipalities and cities. To this end, the allocation of homes to migrants was a priority issue dealt with in 2014.

Based on the study “Besiedlungsrechte der Gemeinden” (settlement rights of municipalities), a working group on allocation directives, which is composed of representatives from housing partners, non-profit housing associations and other experts, was set up. A “Leitfaden für sozial-integrative Wohnungsvergabe” (guideline on social-integrative housing) was published which aims to assist both: municipalities and non-profit housing construction associations in implementing social-integrative allocation management principles in order to meet the challenge of disparities in housing allocation.

Furthermore, the topic of living environments remains a focus of ongoing attention, which is also reflected in the continuing cooperation with the “Kommunal” magazine and the partnership on “Vielfalt und Integration im Raum“ (spatial diversity and integration) formed with the Austrian Conference on Spatial Planning (Österreichische Raumordnungskonferenz, ÖREK) in the summer. The findings produced by this partnership cooperation with ÖREK will be published in a final report.

### 15.4.9. Promoting Integration

The MFA provides funding to a wide range of sustainable and innovative integration projects in the context of national promotion of integration and also allocates EU funding. The content-related basis for integration policy and the national funding strategy is provided by the NAPI.

The **target group for the promotion of integration at national level** includes immigrated third country citizens with a longer-term residence perspective, persons entitled to asylum or subsidiary protection, immigrated EU citizens, Austrian citizens with migration background as well as those members of the Austrian population whose mother tongue is not German, and members of the receiving society. In the context of the implementation of the NAP.I a...
total of 70 national integration projects involving total funding of 3.8 million euros were supported in 2014.

Promotion of integration at national level was supplemented in 2014 with funding from the European Integration Fund (EIF), one of the four EU-SOLID-Funds\(^5\). For the funding period 2007–2013, the EIF budget amounted to a total of 825 million euros, of which Austria received some 14 million euros for the promotion of integration in the context of EIF. The target group for promotion under the EIF was restricted to members of third countries who reside legally in Austria.

Until February, the Federal Ministry of the Interior had been responsible for allocating funding under the EIF. Since the amendment of the Federal Ministries Act entered into force in 2014, the MFA has been the authority responsible for matters relating to the EIF. The latest call for projects under the EIF and the latest allocation of funding took place in 2013. The 62 projects selected under the EIF in this most recent round were still ongoing in 2014 and received funding of 4.3 million euros in total, of which 3 million euros were funded by the EU.

In 2014, the MFA provided funding of some 8 million euros to a total of 132 projects. As shown on the funding map 2014, the projects are distributed across Austria as follows:

\(^5\) The EU SOLID funds include the European Refugee Fund (ERF), the European Integration Fund (EIF), the European Return Fund (RF) and the External Borders Fund (EBF)
Integration

In 2014, it was also necessary to prepare the **funding period for the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF)**, which will replace the EIF in the field of integration. The sum available to Austria for implementing the AMIF amounts to 64.5 million euros of which 44 % are earmarked for improving integration of third-country nationals (i.e. Non-EU citizens). In Austria, the Federal Ministry of the Interior is the national authority responsible for the fund; the MFA is responsible for the field of integration and for allocating funding for integration to projects which seek to further strengthen and improve the integration of the target group also in the years to come.

15.4.10. International Bodies

International thematic exchange as well as cooperation in the context of the EU are being continued and take place exclusively in a coordinating framework. The exchange of experience in the context of integration was pursued under the Network of National Contact Points on Integration (NCPI). In compliance with the Conclusions of the Justice and Home Affairs Council, the NCPI network was set up in 2002 and is coordinated by the European Commission. The target group defined for this exchange are third-country nationals and EU citizens as well as the receiving society.

The European Integration Forum met twice in 2014. In January 2015 this body will be replaced by the European Migration Forum. It will, however, continue to be organised by the European Commission in cooperation with the European Economic and Social Committee. The forum serves as a dialogue platform and facilitates meetings between representatives from civil society, the European institutions and Member States.
16. Media and Information

16.1. Press Work

Keeping the public informed about international policy developments, European issues, crises, and consular assistance for Austrians in need abroad is one of the MFA’s key tasks. At peak times, the Ministry’s staff thus handle more than 100 media enquiries a day, providing information via electronic, print or other media.

In order to ensure optimum service for journalists representing national and international media, the MFA not only organises press conferences but also holds a number of background information briefings on important issues. Staff also provide support and services to media representatives at international conferences and other events.

16.2. PR, New Media, Web Presence

As in many other areas, social media has come to play an important role in the field of foreign policy. It may be used as a tool to communicate content quickly and to offer a wide range of opportunities for digital interaction to the interested public. Pro-active presence and involvement on the web and in social media are thus a necessary continuation and logical consequence of the MFA’s philosophy that service to Austrian citizens is one of the Ministry’s central tasks (in line with its motto “Worldwide at Your Service”).

Although the MFA already plays a pioneering role in using social media within public administration, it continues to step-up its relevant efforts even further. As of 12 December 2014 it already had 30,000 followers on Facebook and 8,000 on Twitter. Apart from these two accounts, the MFA shares relevant information via YouTube, Flickr and the smartphone app “Auslandsservice”, providing consular support for those travelling abroad. Since 2014 the MFA has also been on Instagram and Storify.

Generally speaking, the MFA’s websites are, however, still used as the main source of information. Apart from its homepage, the Ministry’s web presence comprises more than 100 websites of Austrian representations that are operated on the same technical platform. The MFA’s web presence was subject to a comprehensive relaunch. Its user-friendly and barrier-free website integrates seamlessly with the MFA’s new corporate design. In 2014, the Ministry’s website www.bmeia.gv.at alone registered some 3 million visits and 7 million clicks. The most frequently visited pages provide travel information and contact details of Austrian representations abroad and foreign representations in Austria. The accumulated number of visits to the representations’ websites are of a similar order of magnitude. A pivotal element of the MFA’s web presence are the sites www.auslandsservice.at and www.reiseregis-
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trierung.at providing consular support and information to those travelling abroad.

The range of information services offered by the MFA was furthermore expanded by a headquarters visiting and lecturing programme tailor-made for students and school pupils, which provides children and young people with insights into the Ministry’s comprehensive range of activities. Introduced only recently, this programme is already being very actively used.

16.3. Information about Europe

The topic that dominated the provision of information about Europe in the first quarter of 2014 were the elections to the European Parliament, held on 25th May. With a view to informing citizens about the European elections and election day itself, a nation-wide advertising campaign was launched in collaboration with the Federal Chancellery. In cooperation with the European Parliament Information Office in Austria and the Austrian Society for European Politics (Österreichische Gesellschaft für Europapolitik, ÖGfE), activities under the heading of “Laufen für Europa – 25. Mai – I bin dabei” (running for Europe – 25 May – I’m taking part) were launched in the lead-up to and during the Vienna Marathon. As part of this campaign some 800 runners started the marathon wearing “Laufen für Europä” T-shirts in order to raise viewers’ awareness of the election date. Likewise, the MFA made the European elections a priority of its presence in the social media, inter alia by featuring a quiz on Europe (“Europa Quiz”) on its Facebook page. The Ministry of the Interior and the MFA also ran a joint election advert which was likewise used in the social media. In the public segment of the Ambassadors’ Conference on 2 September the Ministry’s communication activities on Europe were presented in a video clip and in an interview with TV presenter Arabella Kiesbauer, Municipal Councillor for European Affairs, Renate Ofner-Rucker, answered questions on her involvement in the “Europa fängt in der Gemeinde an” (Europe starts at local level) initiative.

Another source of EU-related information the interested public could turn to were brief videos, which provide the latest updated information on the EU and on the Ministry’s EU information initiatives and were again made available online by the MFA in 2014.

In the field of European policy education in schools, cooperation with the European Commission Representation in Austria and the Austrian Society for European Politics was continued in 2014. In the first half year of 2014, the travelling exhibition “Die EU und DU – eine Erfolgsgeschichte mit Zukunft” (“the EU and YOU – a success story with a future”) (www.die-eu-und-du.at) that has been managed jointly since 2010 was shown at 28 locations (of which 25 were schools). Some 2,000 pupils and students participated in the accompanying discussion events to which MFA representatives contributed as guest speakers. On its tour across Austria, the exhibition has been pre-
The “Municipal Councillors for European Affairs” Initiative

sent in some 200 locations since 2010 and has been shown in all provinces and types of schools.

In the presence of Federal Minister Sebastian Kurz, the Serbian Minister of European Affairs Jadranka Joksimović, the interim head of the European Commission Representation in Austria Johann Sollgruber, and the Secretary-General of the Austrian Society for European Politics presented the new joint travelling exhibition “Europa – was ist jetzt?” (Europe – what now?) on 2 October. From October to March 2014 it was subsequently shown at a total of 20 schools and reached out to more than 3,860 pupils and students.

During the numerous visits by school classes to the MFA, pupils also had the opportunity to seek information on current EU topics provided by the Ministry experts in presentations and lectures. MFA staff, furthermore, regularly participated as guest speakers at EU information events.

Information on the EU was again a key topic at the Open House event that is traditionally hosted by the MFA on 26 October, Austrian National Day. Staff at information desks provided information on the latest EU-related issues, answered questions on European integration and invited visitors to participate in a quiz about Europe. Another major topic was the 20th anniversary of Austria’s accession to the EU in which context original documents on Austria’s EU accession were exhibited. The exhibition “Europa – was ist jetzt?” (Europe – what now?) was also presented. For the first time a separate information desk was dedicated to the initiative “Europa fängt in der Gemeinde an” (Europe starts at local level). Municipal Councillors for European Affairs Christian Huber from Katzelsdorf and Franz Raz from Traiskirchen informed interested visitors about their activities in the context of the initiative.

16.4. The “Municipal Councillors for European Affairs” Initiative

The initiative “Europa fängt in den Gemeinden an” (“Europe starts at local level”), was launched at the beginning of 2010 by the MFA and the European Commission Representation in Austria. The initiative aims to establish mayors and/municipal councillors as “Municipal Councillors for European Affairs” in as many cities and municipalities as possible. They will then act as the local population’s main contact partners on topics related to the EU. By the end of the year, more than 700 mayors and municipal councillors across all federal provinces and political parties had already joined the initiative.

In the lead-up to the European elections, numerous members of the initiative organised information events on the European elections and/or on topical European policy issues in their communities. Further examples of relevant activities launched by Municipal Councillors for European Affairs in their respective municipalities and cities include a regular EU information page
Media and Information

in the local council newsletters, regular “EU tables” in local pubs and restaurants, EU-related activities directed at pupils at schools as well as “EU committees” at municipal level.

The MFA acts as a central information, contact and service point Municipal Councillors for European Affairs can turn to for information. The range of services provided by the Ministry to Municipal Councillors for European Affairs also includes an email information system they can access for concise facts on current EU issues, an electronic EU information platform enabling Municipal Councillors for European Affairs to network with one another, EU information training seminars for initiative members and information trips to Brussels. From 29 to 31 January and from 19 to 21 November, 25 Municipal Councillors for European Affairs each participated in the sixth and seventh such information trip to Brussels.

Under the heading of “Europa: Unsere Chance mitzugestalten” (Europe: our opportunity for actively shaping the future), the General Meeting was held on 11 April in Salzburg. The meeting’s agenda included a keynote speech by Federal Minister Sebastian Kurz followed by a discussion and a panel discussion with Andreas Wimmer, province chairman of Young Industrialists Salzburg, Richard Kühnel, the European Commission Representative in Austria, Helmut Mödlhammer, President of the Austrian Association of Municipalities, and Brigitte Pallauf, President of the Salzburg Province Parliament.

16.5. Publications

The MFA issues publications on a range of topics aimed at informing the public as comprehensively as possible about its activities. In this context, a special focus is placed on the annual Foreign and European Policy Report, in which the Federal Minister for European and International Affairs informs the Austrian Parliament and the general public about international and European policy developments during the year under review. This report is published both in a printed format and in an electronic version available on the MFA’s website in German and in English. The editions for the years 1979 to 1999, which had not been available electronically were digitised under a cooperation project between the MFA and the University and Provincial Library of Tyrol and included in the documents available for download from both websites. Likewise the reports can also be found in the catalogue of the Österreichischer Bibliotheksverbund (OBV, Austrian Association of Libraries). Other publications included the latest edition of “Advice for Travellers Abroad” and a brochure on the MFA’s Corporate Service.
16.6. Press Officers’ Meeting

Acknowledging the important role played by press and PR work carried out at Austrian representations abroad, the MFA again organised the annual meeting of staff directly involved in these areas at embassies, consulates and cultural fora.
17. The Austrian Foreign Service

17.1. Introduction

The provisions governing the Foreign Service of the Republic of Austria are laid down in a law passed in 1999 (Federal Law Gazette 129/1999).

Since 1 March 2014, the Foreign Ministry, renamed “Federal Ministry for Europe, Integration and Foreign Affairs” has also been responsible for matters relating to the integration of people with migration background in Austria.

By international standards, the Austrian Foreign Service, which currently comprises 100 diplomatic and consular missions abroad, is a lean organisation. With a total of 1,160 staff, the MFA is also one of the smaller departments within the Austrian Federal Government. A high level of staff mobility (alternating service in Austria and abroad, i.e. the “rotation system”) and the extensive use of information and communication technology (ICT) enable the MFA to execute its comprehensive foreign policy mandate and to gradually expand consular services.

An efficient network of embassies and consulates is a sine qua non for safeguarding and promoting Austrian interests at international level. Presence in markets and growth regions coupled with diplomatic efforts around the world enable the provision of support to Austria’s foreign trade. Furthermore, Austria’s commitment to promoting peace and development as well as Vienna’s role as headquarters for numerous international organisations and as venue for international dialogue require constant activities in international organisations, and on all continents.

The MFA regularly evaluates its network of international representations. In response to geopolitical changes, and to ensure efficient use of resources, it thus opens new missions while closing others.

17.2. Working at the MFA

For the majority of MFA staff the rotation system applied within the Ministry means regular transfers between headquarters in Vienna and missions abroad. Apart from requiring a high level of flexibility on the part of the individual employees and their families, this concept also involves substantial logistics and planning. Every year, up to 300 MFA staff are thus transferred to new positions.

At the end of 2014, the Foreign Ministry employed a total of 1,160 staff, 577 (48 %) of whom worked at headquarters and 603 (52 %) abroad.
## Working at the MFA

### Staffing levels at the MFA 2014 by career scheme and gender

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Career scheme</th>
<th>Men</th>
<th>Women</th>
<th>Total/ Career scheme</th>
<th>Share of women in %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Austria</td>
<td>Abroad</td>
<td>Austria</td>
<td>Abroad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diplomatic staff</td>
<td>129</td>
<td>143</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>71</td>
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<td>Consular and administrative staff</td>
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<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subtotal</td>
<td>278</td>
<td>316</td>
<td>279</td>
<td>287</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Total**: 594 (Men) 566 (Women) 1,160 (Total)

As of 31 Dec. 2014, Austrian missions abroad employ a further total of **699 local employees** worldwide.

The MFA complies with the mandatory employment quota for employees with disabilities with a total of 43 individuals (as of 31 Dec. 2014).

In the diplomatic service, the **share of female staff** reached **34.3 % in 2014**.

![Share of female employees at the MFA in %](chart)

The total number of staff at the MFA has continuously declined over the last few years.

As a result of the amendment to the Federal Ministries’ Act, integration matters were transferred to the MFA’s scope of responsibility in 2014 and staff that had previously dealt with integration matters at the Federal Ministry...
of the Interior was taken over by the MFA where a Directorate General for Integration installed.

Students and recent university graduates are offered **internships of up to 12 months in Austria and at embassies abroad**. In 2014, a total of **311 young persons** made use of this opportunity.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Internships</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Austria</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abroad</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>144</td>
<td>215</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>108</td>
<td>191</td>
<td>299</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Short-term internships</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In 2014, the average **retirement age of public officials** at the MFA was 63.7 years (women: 64.2 years, men: 63.4 years). Over the last ten years, the average retirement age has always been above 60 years.

17.3. The Foreign Ministry’s Budget

The 2014 budget for the MFA was set at 418.8 million euros with 67.5 million euros budgeted for head office expenses, 161.6 million euros for operating the Austrian missions abroad, 5.6 million euros for cultural projects, 1.7 million euros for international conferences, 80.3 million euros for international organisations and 82 million euros for the Austrian Development Agency GmbH and the Foreign Disaster Relief Fund as well as 20 million euros for integration projects.
17.4. Worldwide Infrastructure

17.4.1. Real Estate Management and Construction Projects

The MFA’s real estate portfolio includes some 230 properties and/or 350 premises, which are used for office, cultural and residential purposes. Just over half of these are owned by the Republic of Austria, the rest is either rented or leased.

Properties are managed by in-house experts based on a Facility Management Strategy. In this context, the MFA pays particular attention to energy efficiency, the use of renewable energies and the ecological footprint of its premises.
In 15 locations, embassies share their premises with offices of the Austrian Federal Economic Chamber. In seven locations premises are shared with the missions of other European states and the EEAS.

17.4.2. Information Technology

The MFA has for many years played a pioneering role in developing and using innovative IT tools. Under a three-year roll-out programme, the Austrian missions have for instance been equipped with MOVE-IT. This system was designed by the MFA and provides increased reliability, capacity and secure remote access.

Another very useful ICT solution, the online registration tool for Austrians travelling abroad was used more than 35,000 times in 2014. This tool enables authorities to contact and provide services to Austrians abroad in the event of a crisis.

The online registration service for Austrians living abroad was used more than 8,400 times in 2014.

The Schengen Visa Information System (VIS) for the collection of biometric data was expanded to include the regions Australia (Oceania), Caribbean, North America, Western Balkans and Turkey. The VIS enhances visa security and enables all Schengen member states to access interlinked visa data for entry and exit controls.

17.4.3. Information and Knowledge Management

The holdings of the Foreign Policy Library at the Diplomatic Academy Vienna include more than 109,700 books, as well as magazines and other publications, all of them accessible for international research. Access to MFA files may also be provided to academics and researchers, and a number of scientific publications based on these documents was published in 2014.

17.5. Austrian Missions Abroad and Honorary Consulates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Diplomatic and Other Missions of the MFA</th>
<th>As of 31 Dec.2014</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bilateral Embassies</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Permanent Representations at International Organisations</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consulates-General</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural Institutes</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Representations</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In addition to the representations that fall directly under the MFA’s responsibility, Austria’s international presence also includes the Austrian Development Agency (ADA) which maintained 12 offices abroad in 2014.

The Austrian Foreign Service receives valuable support from 300 Honorary Consuls around the world. Honorary Consuls are either Austrians who live abroad or eminent local figures with close ties to Austria. Thanks to their commitment and dedication, they extend the network of Austria’s international presence and contribute to the promotion of economic and cultural relations between Austria and the respective host country.

In 2014, eight new honorary consulates were opened:

• Honorary Consulate Vientiane, Laos
• Honorary Consulate Cincinnati, United States of America
• Honorary Consulate Odessa, Ukraine
• Honorary Consulate Bydgoszcz, Poland
• Honorary Consulate Bitola, Macedonia
• Honorary Consulate Sousse, Tunisia
• Honorary Consulate Skellefteå, Sweden
• Honorary Consulate Groningen, Netherlands
The Diplomatic Academy of Vienna

Established in 1754 during the reign of Empress Maria Theresa as the Oriental Academy, the Diplomatic Academy of Vienna (DA) is one of the oldest schools of its kind. After having been shut down during the 2nd World War, it was re-established in 1964 under its current name as a postgraduate training institution. In 1996, having until then been run and funded by the Austrian federal administration, it was granted the status of an independent public training institution.

The following postgraduate academic programmes were offered in 2014:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Programme</th>
<th>Number of Participants</th>
<th>Number of Austrians</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>50th Diploma programme</td>
<td>21 (20 graduates)</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51st Diploma programme</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17th Master of Advanced International Studies (MAIS) programme; joint degree of the DA and the University of Vienna</td>
<td>62 (60 graduates, 1 eligibility period extension)</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18th MAIS programme</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19th MAIS programme (1st year)</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6th Master of Science in Environmental Technology and International Affairs (ETIA) programme; conducted in cooperation with the Vienna University of Technology</td>
<td>25 (16 graduates, 9 eligibility period extensions)</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7th ETIA programme</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8th ETIA programme (1st year)</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the academic year 2014/15, a total of 182 students from 57 countries and all continents studied at the DA.

In the context of diplomatic training and further training programmes (Executive Training Programmes), the DA offered special courses tailored to the needs of diplomats and other civil service officials from the following countries or groups of countries: South Caucasus and South East Europe, Iraq (Kurdistan Regional Government), Danube area/Western Balkans, Black Sea region, Middle East (M.A.-students), Caribbean and Kazakhstan. Likewise, several seminars were conducted locally in Africa. The DA also conducted
Excursus: The Diplomatic Academy of Vienna

training modules for the MFA, the Austrian Economic Chamber, the Austrian Parliament and the European Patent Office. A negotiation skills and protocol training seminar was also offered for working professionals.

The **Summer Course in German Language and Austrian Studies** was attended by 69 participants from 36 countries worldwide. **Summer Schools** were also organised for the European Studies Institute of MGIMO University (Moscow) and the Free University of Brussels and seminars were held for the School of Youth Diplomacy at the MGIMO University (Moscow).

The DA is also a very popular venue for **conferences**. In 2014, it hosted some 100 public events involving inter alia the Prime Minister of Montenegro, the Foreign Ministers of Austria and Finland, the Deputy Foreign Ministers of Bosnia and Herzegovina and of the Czech Republic, numerous ambassadors and representatives from the EU and international organisations. At the gala event held in celebration of the double anniversary 50 Years Diplomatic Academy of Vienna and 260 Years Oriental Academy, keynote speeches were held inter alia by Federal President Heinz Fischer, Federal Minister Sebastian Kurz, and the Defence and former Foreign Minister of Brazil Celso L. N. Amorim.

The **International Forum on Diplomatic Training** (IFDT, annual meeting of Deans and Directors of Diplomatic Academies and Institutes of International Relations chaired by the DA and Georgetown University, Washington DC) was held in Pretoria from 24 to 26 September on the invitation of the Department of International Relations and Cooperation of the Republic of South Africa.

In addition to its **Yearbook of the Diplomatic Academy of Vienna**, the DA also published the book “Auf den Spuren Wallenbergs” (In Raoul Wallenberg’s Footsteps) in collaboration with the Graz-based Ludwig Boltzmann Institute for Research on the Consequences of War.
18. Selected Documents

Note: All speeches to be checked against delivery

18.1. Federal Minister Sebastian Kurz, Chairman of the Committee of Ministers
Address to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe
Strasbourg, 27 January 2014

Madam President,
President of the Court,
Secretary-General,
Members of the Parliamentary Assembly,

As the new Austrian Minister for Foreign Affairs, I am pleased to address the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe for the first time.

I do not know how well informed you are about Austrian domestic policy and the formation of the new Austrian government. Whatever the case, if you are surprised at my age, I can assure you that not all the new ministers in Austria are as young as me. For two and a half years, I served as State Secretary for Integration. A few weeks ago, when the new government was being formed, our deputy Chancellor, Michael Spindelegger, decided to accept the post of Minister of Finance. He asked me to pass on his very best wishes to you and he is grateful for the outstanding co-operation with Council of Europe. He also asked me to take up the post of Minister for Foreign Affairs, and this is not just a great honour for me, but also – and above all – a great challenge. I am pleased that in 2014 my country is chairing the Committee of Ministers. This poses an additional challenge, but it goes without saying that Austria is glad to be able to make a contribution to the work of the Council of Europe.

I thank you, Madam President, for the constructive talks we had earlier on today. I congratulate you on your election and would like to assure you straight away that you have Austria’s full support. I hope that we will be able to work closely together. I was particularly pleased to have met someone who has been in post for an even shorter time than I have as, over the last few weeks, I have met political figures who have been performing their functions for a lot longer.

As a representative of the younger generation, I do not have all the experience, that most of you have acquired over the years and decades. What I may be able to contribute, however, is the viewpoint of a young pro-European generation which has grown up in a Europe of freedom, peace and democ-
racy. I can also express the gratitude of this generation, which is benefiting the most from the work done by the Council of Europe in the past. For this generation, it has always gone without saying that we can freely express our opinions, that we are not exposed to arbitrary action by the authorities or the police and that citizens’ rights are protected by an independent judiciary. This freedom which I have always known in Austria and is the case in many European countries is not, alas, an enduring reality for all Europeans. As you know, today is International Holocaust Remembrance Day and I would like to take this opportunity to point out to you that Europe is still not free of racism, anti-Semitism and discrimination. We must make major efforts and work together to defend the Council of Europe’s achievements and ensure that every individual’s rights are protected.

As State Secretary for Integration, I have realised that it is in fact people migrating from one country to the other, who are fleeing their homeland or have decided of their own accord to seek a new one, who are the subject of discrimination. In a globalised world, where more and more people leave their home countries and settle elsewhere, we need to ensure that all people are judged not according to their origin, colour of skin or religion but according to their character, their skills and their work ethic. In our increasingly mixed societies, we have to make sure that everyone can play a part. Whatever people’s origins, it must be possible, in a united Europe, for them to make a contribution, whether in the labour market, the voluntary sector, the public services or as a political leader. It is important to insist, therefore, on the recognition of qualifications acquired abroad, or that may be harder to document. In this area, we must make an effort to ensure that everyone can make his or her contribution in their new homeland.

In our societies, which are becoming more and more diverse, religion also plays a leading role. More and more people have differing religious beliefs and religious diversity is an increasingly prominent feature of European States. Consequently, religion should be regarded not as a problem but as a part of the solution to living together more harmoniously. These are goals which the Council of Europe has always pursued with determination and I hope that this will continue to be the case in future.

Since joining the Council of Europe in 1956, Austria has always worked hard to make an active and constructive contribution to the Organisation. There have been two Austrian Presidents of the Parliamentary Assembly, three Austrian Secretaries General and two Austrian Presidents of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities. We have also chaired the Committee of Ministers six times and also in 2014, we regard this task as the most important of our multilateral activities. During our chairmanship, it will be our honour to celebrate the 65th anniversary of the creation of the Council of Europe. I already look forward to being able to welcome you, Madam President, to the 124th session of the Committee of Ministers, in Vienna, at the beginning of May.
In the framework of its chairmanship, Austria has set itself practical objectives and thematic priorities.

The first is freedom of expression, without which there can be no democracy. It must be possible for people to express their opinions and this is the prerequisite for a proper civil society. Journalists undoubtedly have a key role in this area, in making sure that the public is well informed. The European Court of Human Rights rightly considers that journalists are society’s watchdogs, this means that they need our protection and support. As member States, we have a responsibility in this sphere. One of the priorities of our chairmanship therefore is to protect freedom of expression and to protect journalists.

Our second priority is to protect rights on the Internet. We can no longer live without this tool, which brings people together and helps them to take part in the life of the community. The Internet is an open forum and it is not just for young people. However, open does not mean outside the law. We should not ignore infringements of human rights and fundamental democratic principles on the Internet. The right to respect for privacy, for instance, is absolutely crucial. No country or company should be allowed, without clear legal basis or special authorising measures, to collect data on Internet users and use them without their knowledge. Recent events have shown that action is needed in this area to protect people’s rights. I heartily invite you therefore to attend an expert conference in Graz on 13 and 14 March, entitled “Shaping the digital environment – ensuring our rights on the internet”, which will address digital rights.

The third priority of our chairmanship will be combating trafficking in human beings. This is a crime and a scourge of our societies. We intend to use our chairmanship to encourage more and more States to support and accede to the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings. A conference will be held in Vienna on 17 and 18 February in partnership with the Swiss chairmanship of the OSCE. It will seek to take stock of the work done so far and chart the future steps to be taken.

The aim is to afford victims of trafficking better protection and also to take preventive measures.

We have already used our chairmanship so far to take an active role with regard to all issues, whether on structure, personnel or substance. For instance, we have managed to put in place a biennial budget for the Council of Europe’s programme in 2014 and 2015. As Chair, a duty which we take as a particularly serious challenge indeed is the upcoming Recommendation of the Committee of Ministers for the election of the Secretary General. Our Permanent Representative in Strasbourg has been given very clear instructions to perform this duty as Chair with the utmost impartiality and necessary transparency.
Other important substantive issues have also been a focus of our attention. I am thinking, in particular, of the abolition of the death penalty, an issue on which Europe has assumed a global pioneering role setting worldwide standards. For my generation, which grew up in modern-day Europe, it is taken for granted, but death penalty is still applied widely in many other countries. It is our duty to strive to ensure it is abolished in all the countries where it still exists. In this connection, on 18 December 2013, the Committee of Ministers adopted a statement on executions in the United States and Japan, and we call on these countries to end this inhumane practice. At the very least there should be a moratorium on implementation of the death penalty. We call on the Council of Europe observer States to respect its values in this regard.

In addition to this statement on the death penalty, the Committee of Ministers also adopted a declaration on the situation in Ukraine. Things have deteriorated considerably there in recent weeks, including fatalities. I think it is clear that the crisis in Ukraine can be overcome only through peaceful and democratic means. Human rights, freedom of assembly and freedom of expression must be safeguarded to permit genuine dialogue and a solution to this crisis.

We welcome the announcement made by the Secretary General of the Council of Europe to the effect that the controversial legislation passed in Ukraine will be studied in great detail and independently. An escalation of the violence must be prevented, and it must be ensured that peace, democracy and the rule of law, the historical achievements of the Council of Europe, are fully respected in Ukraine.

Our chairmanship must also contribute to the reform process.

The Council of Europe has provided itself with many instruments that can make a real difference to the everyday life of people in Europe. Our aim is to utilise them and also to optimise them, concentrating on core tasks.

Our principal objective is naturally to inform citizens and foster their participation. As members of the Parliamentary Assembly, you all know far better than I do that success with all our projects and common goals is achieved only once they are implemented on the ground in our respective countries. It should be our goal to explain Europe to our citizens, and let them take part in it!

The Council of Europe has particularly remarkable expertise in the field of human rights. The quality of the work done here enables us to improve our national human rights protection mechanisms. One example shows how fast this expertise can achieve change for good: during a visit to Austria in 2012 the Commissioner for Human Rights proposed that we adopt a national action plan for human rights; one year later we have taken this suggestion on board and it is part of the new Austrian Government’s work programme.

In recent years, many encouraging advances have been made in the reform of the European human rights protection system. The European Court of Human
Rights plays a fundamental role in this area and is symbolic of a Europe that takes the rights of each individual seriously. The right of individual petition is crucial in this regard.

For the above reason, it is unfortunately a matter of serious concern to see high-ranking politicians in one member State calling into question the Court and its judgments. This goes entirely in the wrong direction. The European Convention on Human Rights and the Court are indispensable to human rights protection and the rule of law in Europe. We must do everything possible to ensure that the system is not weakened. Under our chairmanship, we shall therefore seek to secure more effective implementation of the Convention and the Court’s judgments at national level. Moreover, I have spoken to the President of the Court just today so that we work together in this direction.

Concerning the European Union’s accession to the European Convention on Human Rights, everything is ready. The relevant procedures have been launched within the European Union, and I hope to see further progress on this matter under our chairmanship.

Co-operation between the Council of Europe and the European Union must be paid considerable attention in the future. In recent years, practical co-operation has produced tangible results for the more than 500 million EU citizens and 820 million citizens of the Council of Europe member States. We should continue our meaningful co-operation and division of labour, and deepen it, while respecting the independence of each institution.

Ladies and Gentlemen, members of the Parliamentary Assembly, I look forward to working with you during our chairmanship. I am sure that I will benefit greatly from your experience and expertise, and that we will together be able to put the Council of Europe’s potential to the best possible use. Let us fight together for the ideals and principles of this Organisation: human rights, democracy and the rule of law.

Our aim must be to protect and promote these ideals and principles, so that many other people can benefit from the achievements of the Council of Europe, as I have been used to doing in Austria.

Thank you for your attention. I look forward to an excellent co-operation with you and I also very much look forward to our discussion.
Selected Documents

18.2. Federal Minister Sebastian Kurz, Statement on Ukraine to the Plenary of the Austrian Parliament
Vienna, 24 February 2014

Ladies and Gentlemen,
Members of Parliament,
Mr. President,

I would like to thank you for the opportunity to report on an issue of international policy that gives rise to concern for us all.

Regardless of the time slot that was allocated to this report before Parliament, I still welcome the opportunity to give it. I also believe that all parties agree that the Ukrainian situation is a topic that requires discussion here in Parliament.

Watching the reports on television or looking at the images in the newspapers, it is tempting to believe that these are events that are happening far away from us.

However, the reality is very different. Ukraine is an integral part of Europe and less than 500 kilometres from our national borders.

Over a period of weeks, thousands of protesters have gathered in the centre of Kiev to voice their dissatisfaction with the situation in their country and to demand a change of course.

The attempts of the Ukrainian government to suppress and brutally crush this protest movement have backfired.

Towards the middle of last week, the situation escalated and dozens of people were killed and more than 1.000 injured.

The things that are happening in Ukraine at the moment are simply unimaginable, especially for a young person like myself.

My generation has always taken it for granted to grow up in a country where we are free to express our opinions, where we are not exposed to random police action and where an independent judiciary protects the rights of each individual citizen.

The events in Ukraine are a drastic reminder of the fact that, unfortunately, this sort of freedom still is not a sustainable reality for all European citizens.

For many people in Ukraine, especially young people, the European Union has thus become a symbol of freedom, of the rule of law and of opportunities for economic development.

From an Austrian and from a European perspective, we must do everything we can to ensure these people are not disappointed!

For this reason, I am glad to say that, from the very start, the European Union has not turned a blind eye but has taken a very clear stance.
At first, the EU focused on mediation and dialogue, but as the situation continued to escalate, it showed great determination and unity.

At the last meeting of the Council of Foreign Ministers on 10 February, the European Union proposed explicit sanctions and demonstrated very clearly that it would immediately react to a further exacerbation of the situation in Ukraine.

After the situation had escalated on Tuesday, a special meeting of the Foreign Ministers was convened within a very short time and a coherent, clear signal was sent.

I would like to congratulate the High Representative of the EU, Catherine Ashton, on this achievement. She has made a major contribution towards this speedy, unambiguous and unified reaction on the part of the European Union.

In this context, I would also like to thank all the Austrian authorities who worked together to ensure that the sanctions can be implemented in Austria immediately and also to prevent monies being withdrawn from Austria prior to the sanctions entering into force, mainly through the efforts of the Financial Market Authority.

In parallel to this extraordinary meeting that took place in Brussels, Lady Ashton had commissioned the Foreign Ministers of Germany, France and Poland to negotiate with government representatives, with the opposition and Maidan representatives directly in Kiev to reinforce the threat of imminent sanctions.

Frequently – and not always without justification – the European Union is accused of taking too long over voting processes and of presenting 28 individual opinions rather than a united front.

In this case, the situation couldn’t have been more different! The united front that the EU presented and its determined stance towards events in Ukraine have brought results.

Since then, things have been happening thick and fast in Ukraine: President Yanukovych was ousted by the Ukrainian parliament and Oleksandr Turchynov, the right-hand man of Yulia Tymoshenko, was appointed interim President. Early elections are scheduled to take place on 25 May.

We are all relieved that the bloodshed in Ukraine has come to an end.

However, we must not make the mistake of believing that the situation in Ukraine has been resolved once and for all.

Ukraine needs concrete support to carry through this process of transformation and to strengthen the pro-European forces and the European perspective in the country.
The fact that Catherine Ashton is once again travelling to Ukraine today is a clear signal of the EU’s ongoing commitment to support of the Ukrainian cause.

Ukraine has a deficit that amounts to billions. Russia has put a stop to all financial aid for Ukraine and I therefore believe that it would be the appropriate message if the EU now quickly compiled a comprehensive economic aid package together with the International Monetary Fund, the European Investment Bank and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development.

However, an essential contribution could also be made by two other international organisations that are currently chaired by Austria and Switzerland respectively – the Council of Europe and the OSCE.

After the violence of recent days that has claimed many lives and left countless injured, the events in Ukraine must be subject to an independent investigation.

We have used our Presidency in the Council of Europe to ask Secretary General Jagland to exhaust all possibilities of the Council of Europe for supporting Ukraine. I am also glad that the Council of Europe as the central European human rights organisation has already presented Ukraine with a concrete offer of support in the independent investigation of recent events.

The OSCE shall also play an important role in this context and, jointly with the EU, offer its expertise as an observer of the election process to ensure that the elections in May will be truly democratic and fair.

In addition to the European Union and the international organisations, Austria, too has the responsibility and the possibility of making a direct contribution:

We shall live up to this responsibility in a humanitarian context, but also seize the possibility of providing sustainable assistance.

Supporting the young people of Ukraine is probably the most sustainable way of providing assistance – not only because the protest movement was largely carried by the young people of the country, but also because they are the ones best equipped to carry European values and ideas, respect for human rights and the desire for rule of law into their country.

I thus consider it an important signal that, together with the Federal Ministry of Science, we have decided to encourage Austrian universities to expand the range of services and cooperation initiatives targeted at Ukrainian institutions in the framework of the Erasmus+ Programme. This should give a greater number of Ukrainian students the possibility for completing part of their studies in Austria.

To help young Ukrainians gain access to the EU, we have also ensured that university students, high school students, NGOs, journalists and scientists
will not be charged fees for visas that apply for periods longer than three months.

This means in concrete terms that these groups shall continue to be able to come to Austria without shouldering any additional financial burden.

We have also advised the Austrian Embassy in Kiev to accelerate processes and will dispatch additional staff to this effect where required.

In addition, Austria is providing concrete support for the reform of the judiciary and the establishment of rule of law.

In agreement with the Federal Ministry of Justice, we are able to put a group of Austrian experts at the disposal of the Ukrainian government and the NGOs in Ukraine.

Such joint initiatives on the level of the judiciary could either be bilateral or part of a mission headed by the Council of Europe into which Secretary General Jagland is already putting intense efforts.

Ladies and gentlemen, members of parliament,

The situation in Ukraine continues to be volatile and the balance may still tilt at any moment.

I would therefore like to appeal to the political decision-makers in Ukraine to avoid violence of any kind and to refrain from repeating previous mistakes.

And while the European Union rejoices in the success of the pro-European powers in Ukraine, we must also be very aware of the need to tread lightly and to avoid asking too much, too soon.

The possibility must always be open for the Ukraine of cultivating regional cooperation with neighbours such as Russia in addition to the necessary and important rapprochement to the EU.

This is the only way of ensuring a positive, peaceful perspective for Ukraine.


Stocktaking by the Austrian Chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe (14 November 2013–14 May 2014)

The Austrian Chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe will conclude on 14 May 2014 when the handover of the chairmanship to Azerbaijan will take effect.

By then, Austria will have chaired the Committee of Ministers for exactly six months, since the Armenian Foreign Minister Edward Nalbandian handed over the chairmanship to Vice Chancellor and Foreign Minister Michael Spindelegger on 14 November 2013 in Strasbourg. The time of our chairma-
ship has been marked by important developments, not all of which were to be expected when Austria took the helm of the Organisation in mid-November 2013.

The situation in Ukraine certainly became the political focus of the Council of Europe over the last few months. It has been discussed at every meeting of Ministers’ Deputies since the beginning of the year. It was also chosen as the topic of the informal working session for the 124th Session of the Committee of Ministers on 6 May in Vienna.

Since the beginning of the crisis, the Committee of Ministers has repeatedly called for a peaceful solution of the current crisis through dialogue and negotiation and has called for respect of international law, of the United Nations’ Charter and of the Statute of the Council of Europe, and the full respect of the territorial integrity, unity and independence of Ukraine. It was also underlined that the illegal referendum held in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol on 16 March 2014 and the subsequent illegal annexation by the Russian Federation cannot form the basis for any alteration of the status of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol.

Minister Sebastian Kurz twice visited Ukraine as Chairman of the Committee of Ministers together with the Secretary General. The Committee of Ministers and the Secretary General offered concrete and tailor-made assistance to Ukraine, which includes an International Advisory Panel to promote confidence through an independent investigation of acts of violence, as well as a tripartite working party involving the Parliament, the Ministry of Justice of Ukraine and the Council of Europe to bring forward the legislative reforms, which the Council of Europe stands ready to support, including regarding constitutional reform through its Venice Commission.

Furthermore, following a request made by the Ukrainian authorities, the Committee of Ministers instructed the Advisory Committee of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities to review the situation of national minorities in Ukraine. Following a visit of the Advisory Committee and the submission of the Advisory Committee’s report, the Ministers’ Deputies noted the concerns raised therein and called on the parties concerned to effectively follow up on all the report’s conclusions. The Committee also invited the Advisory Committee to continue to monitor the situation of national minorities throughout Ukraine, including in Crimea, using all available means and welcomed in this context the launching of the third monitoring cycle regarding the implementation by Ukraine of the provisions of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages and the fourth monitoring cycle regarding the implementation by Ukraine of the provisions of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, under which an assessment regarding the protection of the rights of persons belonging to national minorities, including regional or minority languages, will be provided throughout Ukraine, including in Crimea.
In the context of the Council of Europe’s assistance package for Ukraine, the Ministers’ Deputies welcomed the immediate assistance measures for Ukraine presented by the Secretary General, including the important tasks assigned to the Venice Commission in assisting Ukraine in various areas of reform, encouraged their rapid implementation and invited member States to urgently consider granting voluntary contributions for their financing.

The Ministers’ Deputies also firmly recalled the duty of all member States to comply with the commitments undertaken under the Statute of the Council of Europe and the relevant instruments of the Organisation and stressed in this context the importance of the interim measure granted by the European Court of Human Rights following the Inter-State application lodged by Ukraine and called on the two Parties concerned to comply with this measure without delay. They urged the Russian Federation to enter into a direct dialogue with the Government of Ukraine.

The acting Minister of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine, Mr Andrii Deshchytsia, addressed a meeting of Ministers’ Deputies, in which the commitment of the Ukrainian authorities -reiterated by Minister Deshchytsia on this occasion- to effectively implement reforms aimed at strengthening human rights protection, the functioning of democratic institutions and the rule of law in line with the Council of Europe’s values, was welcomed.

As set out in the presentation of the priorities of the Austrian Chairmanship at its start in November 2013, our priorities had been defined in response to challenges in all three areas of the Council of Europe’s core mission – human rights, democracy and the rule of law – and on the basis of the common priorities agreed upon by Andorra, Armenia and Austria.

The chairmanship has continuously worked on the implementation of its priorities during the last six months and is pleased to be able to report on initiatives and events held in this context:

Respect for freedom of expression and the safety of journalists, whose watchdog function has repeatedly been highlighted by the European Court of Human Rights, remain primary concerns of Austria. The Chairmanship thus welcomes that the Thematic Debate on “Safety of Journalists”, which was held in December 2013 upon the proposal by Austria, has led to the creation of a Task Force chaired by the Deputy Secretary General, consisting of representatives of the relevant Secretariat departments. This Task Force has taken stock of work already under way for a better protection of journalists and identified areas for further consideration and concrete action. The Ministers’ Deputies have taken note of these follow-up proposals made by the Secretary General and invited him to implement these proposals and to report in due course.

Moreover, the Committee of Ministers has adopted a declaration on the protection of journalism and safety of journalists and other media actors in which it alerted member States of the increasing number of reports of attacks
on journalists and other media actors in several parts of Europe. It decided to facilitate the development of an Internet-based platform drawing on information supplied by interested media freedom organisations to record and publicise possible infringements of the rights guaranteed by Article 10 of the European Convention on Human Rights. The Committee of Ministers also urged member States to fulfil their positive obligations to protect journalists and other media actors from any form of attack, and to end impunity in compliance with the European Convention on Human Rights and in the light of the case law of the European Court of Human Rights and invited member States to review at least once every two years the conformity of domestic laws and practices with these obligations on the part of member States. In the declaration, the Committee of Ministers also encouraged member States to contribute to the concerted international efforts to enhance the protection of journalists and other media actors by ensuring that legal frameworks and law-enforcement practices are fully in accord with international human rights standards. The implementation of the UN Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity is deemed an urgent and vital necessity in this context.

Furthermore, the Committee of Ministers agreed to intensify its standard-setting and co-operation activities for the protection of journalism and the safety of journalists and other media actors as a priority and to contribute expertise to other international organisations with regard to the particular competence of the Council of Europe. It will consider further measures to ensure the protection of journalists from threats and acts of violence, as well as measures to eradicate impunity, and the alignment of laws and practices concerning defamation, anti-terrorism and protection of journalists’ sources with the European Convention on Human Rights. It also will address the specific challenges and threats that women journalists are confronted with in the course of their work.

The Internet as a vital tool for connecting people and for participation in democratic processes was another focus of the Austrian Chairmanship. At the Conference “Shaping the Digital Environment – Ensuring our Rights on the Internet” held in Graz in March this year, over 150 participants from 37 countries, representing governments, international organisations, civil society and industry, addressed the impact of the Internet on human rights, the rule of law, and democracy. The conference featured on its agenda issues such as privacy on the internet, public interest content and industry responses to user rights. Participants also assessed the progress made on the Council of Europe’s Internet Governance Strategy 2012–2015 and identified strategic priorities beyond 2015. As the conclusions of the Conference show, the Council of Europe’s Internet Governance Strategy has delivered many tangible results and more progress is expected. The coming two years will focus on the delivery of appropriate legal and political instruments and other tools, such as key instruments and tools on net neutrality, transparency, free
flow of Internet content, through relevant bodies and actors of the Council of Europe as well as by co-operation arrangements between governments, the private sector, civil society and relevant technical communities.

In April this year, the Committee of Ministers adopted a **Guide to human rights for Internet users** to help them better understand their human rights online and what they can do when these rights are challenged. The Guide is based on the rights and freedoms contained in the European Convention on Human Rights, as interpreted by the European Court of Human Rights, and on other Council of Europe conventions and legal texts. It focuses on the human rights on which the internet has most impact: access and non-discrimination, freedom of expression and information, freedom of assembly, association and participation, privacy and data protection, education and literacy, protection of children and young people, and the right to effective remedies for violations of human rights.

The fight against trafficking in human beings has been a further priority of the Austrian Chairmanship. In February this year, the conference “**Not for Sale – Joining Forces Against Trafficking in Human Beings**”, jointly organised with the Swiss Chairmanship of the OSCE, was held in Vienna. With over 450 participants, this conference received a high level of attention from interested stakeholders as well as media representatives. The aim of the conference was to take stock of the progress made so far and to discuss the challenges in the implementation of the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Human Trafficking. It also provided an opportunity for exchanges on how legally binding standards, monitoring mechanisms and political strategies can mutually reinforce each other and lead to effective action to counter trafficking in human beings. Following the conference, a “Framework for Joint Action” was drafted with the aim of making concrete proposals for follow-up to the conference. It was circulated among Delegations who were given the opportunity to comment on it. The Austrian Chairmanship is in close contact with the Swiss Chairmanship of the OSCE as well as experts from the Secretariats of the two organisations regarding the implementation of these proposals. Austria considers this cooperation with the OSCE as an excellent example for **strengthened synergies** between both organisations and stands ready to support the continuation of such a close cooperation with the OSCE and other international organisations.

A **conference on strengthening the capacity of parliamentarians, judges and prosecutors to prevent corruption in their own ranks** held at the International Anti-Corruption Academy in Laxenburg, Austria in April this year brought together around 70 participants from GRECO member States, as well as from international organisations and other relevant stakeholders. In addition to taking stock of national experience and main findings in the prevention of corruption in respect of members of parliament, judges and prosecutors, it also provided an opportunity to review policies, exchange information on good practices and to identify future action in the light of GRECO’s Fourth
Evaluation Round. The conference opened with a high-level segment with several Ministers and high-level officials. In the following expert sessions, GRECO delegates of all member States worked together with experts and representatives from the different sectors concerned to highlight achievements on prevention of corruption in respect of members of parliament as well as judges and prosecutors.

At the conference “Human Rights and Disability”, organised by the Austrian Chairmanship in April this year in Vienna, the political perspectives and the legal instruments on human rights of the Council of Europe and the United Nations and their importance for persons with disabilities were discussed, introduced by high level keynote speakers.

The protection of women against violence, including domestic violence was another priority area for our Chairmanship. Austria constantly highlighted the importance of the Council of Europe’s pioneer work in this field. The Istanbul Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence will enter into force on 1 August 2014. This treaty, for the first time in Europe, sets legally binding standards to prevent violence against women, to protect its victims and punish perpetrators.

Having actively promoted among member states the ratification of the Istanbul Convention in multilateral fora as well as on bilateral level together with Turkey in order to allow for an early entry into force, Austria is particularly pleased that this goal was assured during our Chairmanship. Austria expresses its appreciation to Andorra, Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Denmark, Italy, Montenegro, Portugal, Serbia, Spain and Turkey whose ratifications next to our own made it possible to surpass the number of ratifications necessary to achieve this. At the same time, Austria continues to encourage all member states that have not yet done so to sign and ratify this key convention.

Against the background of an ageing society, the sustainability of pension systems and issues regarding the fight against poverty were discussed by experts in the conference “Old-age pensions for women – entitlement and poverty avoidance“ organised by the Austrian Chairmanship in Vienna in April this year.

With a view to the commemoration of the outbreak of the First World War, Austria together with Hungary organised the conference “The First World War in Central European Memory: Trans/national perspectives, European contexts” from 20–22 April in Vienna. The aim of the conference was to discuss the various national historical narratives of the events from 1914–1918 and to link them in order to develop a transnational perspective on these different narratives.

The importance the Austrian Chairmanship attributes to interinstitutional relations was highlighted through the high level participation of Austrian representatives at the sessions of the Parliamentary Assembly and the Con-
gress of Local and Regional Authorities. Next to the two oral communications by Austria’s Foreign Minister Sebastian Kurz, Chairman of the Committee of Ministers, to the Parliamentary Assembly, both Austrian Federal President Heinz Fischer and Austrian Federal Chancellor Werner Faymann addressed the Assembly. The Austrian Federal Minister for Agriculture, Forestry, Environment and Water, Andrä Rupprechter, representing the Austrian Chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers, addressed the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities at its March Session, during which the Congress also celebrated its 20th anniversary.

Visits of the Chairman of the Committee of Ministers and of the Austrian Federal President to the European Court of Human Rights underlined the importance Austria attaches to the protection system set up under the European Convention on Human Rights and to the right to individual application as well as the respect for the Court.

On internal issues of the Council of Europe, the chairmanship is pleased to note that the Organisation’s reform process was further pursued over the last semester. The adoption of the biennial Programme and Budget for 2014–2015 took place during the Austrian Chairmanship. It comprises 31 operational programmes, covering the intergovernmental sector, the institutions, the partial agreements and the independent mechanisms, all of which allows the Organisation to further streamline and focus its activities in line with its mandate. Austria is looking forward to a continuation of the reform process.

During the Austrian Chairmanship, the Committee of Ministers also fulfilled its statutory obligations regarding the election process for the post of Secretary General, with effect from 1 October 2014. It decided in accordance with the rules of procedure and the joint interpretative statement to submit to the Parliamentary Assembly the candidatures of Mr Thorbjørn Jagland (Norway) and Mrs Sabine Leutheusser-Schnarrenberger (Germany), with a view to the election of the next Secretary General by the Assembly during its June session.
18.4. **Granting EU Candidate Status to Albania: Letter by 17 EU Foreign Ministers to EU HR Catherine Ashton and the Greek Presidency of the EU Council, 5 June 2014**

CATHERINE ASHTON, HIGH REPRESENTATIVE OF THE EU FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND SECURITY POLICY
EVANGELOS VENIZELOS, DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER AND MINISTER FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS, GREECE
5 June 2014
Dear Ms. Ashton,
Dear Mr. Venizelos,
During recent years Albania has moved considerably and consistently forward on its path to EU-integration, as confirmed by the European Commission’s recommendation of October 2013 to grant candidate status.

Last December, the Council welcomed the further action taken by Albania in the fight against corruption and organised crime, the commitment of the new government and commended its intensified efforts in these areas.

Now, Albania’s commitment and progress, as outlined in the Commission’s June 2014 report, clearly merit further recognition by the European Union. Albania has convincingly fulfilled the conditions that the European Union has asked for. During recent months, Albania has strengthened its efforts in the area of rule of law.

In the fight against corruption and organized crime Albania has shown continued political will to act decisively. To name a few examples: The legal and institutional framework on anticorruption has been strengthened. Law enforcement agencies have intensified their activities; the police have undertaken a number of operations against criminal activities, including fighting drug trafficking. International cooperation has been stepped up. The country has also demonstrated its commitment to judicial reform and started working with the Venice Commission to improve the independence, accountability and professionalism of the judiciary.

Looking ahead to the June General Affairs Council and subsequent the European Council we therefore reiterate our support in favour of granting candidate status to Albania.

This would encourage Albania to continue its reform path and keep up the reform momentum. It would also have the potential to signal to the previous government, that the reform foundations they put in place are being recognised, facilitating in this way the establishment of a more inclusive political culture.

The enlargement process is a demanding process with strict conditionality. It is therefore important to show that once this conditionality is fulfilled, the
European Union stands ready to reward progress and help countries in their path towards membership. Granting candidate status to Albania therefore will send a strong and important signal to the countries of the region and enforce the transforming and stabilising power of the enlargement process – a process that benefits both the EU’s and the enlargement countries’ citizens. We also send this letter to Commissioner Stefan Füle, as well as our colleagues in the General Affairs Council.

Sincerely,

Sebastian Kurz, Federal Minister for Europe, Integration and Foreign Affairs of Austria
Federica Mogherini, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Italy
Vesna Pusić, First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign and European Affairs of Croatia
Karl Erjavec, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of Slovenia
Miroslav Lajčák, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic
Titus Corlatean, Minter of Foreign Affairs of Romania
Kristian Vigenin, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Bulgaria
Radosław Sikorski, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Poland
János Martonyi, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Hungary
Carl Bildt, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Sweden
Ioannis Kasoulides, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Cyprus
Urmas Paet, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Estonia
Eamon Gilmore, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade of Ireland
Edgars Rinkēvičs, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Latvia
Linas Linkevičius, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Lithuania
George W. Vella, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Malta
Ladies and Gentlemen,
Dear Guests,
Dear Colleagues,

Let me welcome you very warmly to the public segment of this year’s Ambassadors’ Conference. It is a great pleasure to have you all here, to see our ambassadors who have come from all around the world and to welcome so many interested guests and especially the guests of honour who are with us today.

I still remember very well when Michael Spindelegger asked me just nine months ago whether I could envisage being his successor in the Foreign Ministry. I immediately shared with him my concerns about getting up to speed with dealing with the Foreign Ministry’s thematic and geographic scope and wide range of most diverse tasks. Although he agreed with me on that issue, he at the same time reassured me, telling me “The good thing is that major crises are rare, so you will be able to take your time and familiarise yourself with all the subject matter”.

Anyway, in view of the fact that events unfolded the way they did, it turned out he wasn’t necessarily right on that score. It was indeed a case of ‘in at the deep end’. A few days after having started at the Foreign Ministry there was a very difficult consular case in Dubai, only a few weeks later the crisis in Ukraine broke out followed by the one in Gaza and lots of other events besides. So I am still waiting for the quiet introduction phase.

But standing here today I want to tell you how very grateful I am for the cordial reception you have given me and for the huge support I have received during these first eight months at this Ministry. Let me therefore take the opportunity of speaking at this public segment to extend my warmest thanks to all diplomats and all employees at this Ministry.

We are a small team, but we are a team that accomplishes great things worldwide. Our diplomats, and therefore the Ministry too, enjoy an excellent reputation worldwide. Naturally this helps me in my daily work and is the guarantor for the Foreign Ministry’s success. But most of all this is positive and beneficial for the Republic of Austria as a whole. Let me therefore thank you again for all your commitment and your hard work at this Ministry.

Today’s conference marks a premiere. Not only for me, because it is my first Ambassadors’ Conference, but for all of us, because we deliberately included this public segment. We want to provide people with the opportunity to gain insights into the Foreign Ministry’s work, to facilitate discussions and enable participants to meet and establish contacts. And when Stefan Szyszkowitz, Member of the Executive Board of EVN, says that within just half an hour
of being here he has been able to speak with more ambassadors than he other-
wise has the chance of meeting in the space of a year, then we really have
achieved the goal we have set ourselves for today’s event.

We want to provide an overview of the broad range of topics and regions we
are working on and in. With this in mind, I will definitely refrain from trying
to address all topics we deal with in our daily activities. Rather, I would like
to briefly highlight three topics that are currently of particular relevance for
us.

Let me start with what is probably the largest crisis, Europe has experienced
in a long time. The crisis in Ukraine is not only omnipresent – but especially
for young people, like me, who know the Cold War period only from history
books – it is something unfathomable, something we would have thought
unimaginable.

Now, with the benefit of hindsight it is always easier to say that this would
all have been foreseeable, that the European Union could and should have
seen it coming. But if we are honest, we probably all know that none of us
would have expected President Yanukovych to refuse to sign the EU Asso-
ciation Agreement on the very day it was ready for signature. It is unlikely
that anyone could have foreseen that this would trigger a Maidan movement
which is so powerful that he would be forced to leave the country and that
a new government would take over. And I assume none of us would have
expected Russia to subsequently annex the Crimea, and meanwhile not only
supports separatists in the East of Ukraine but has even stationed Russian
soldiers there.

Europe quite rightly does not want to – and indeed must not – turn a blind
eye to such developments. And I am very gratified that right from the outset,
Europe made it very clear that there must not be a military answer to this
conflict, that a political solution must be sought.

What we have experienced over these last few days is a further aggravation
of the conflict. The fact that Russian soldiers are actually operating there
is a further escalation to which the European Union will have to react by
imposing further sanctions, further restrictive measures. From the domestic
policy point of view this means that we need to prepare for further potential
counter-reactions by Russia, and for the European Union this means that we
must at the same time and on all accounts continue negotiating. Because the
goal to be pursued is still a ceasefire and a peaceful negotiated solution to
the conflict.

However, the huge challenge facing the European Union and Austria is that
this – unfortunately – is not the only trouble spot at the moment. Simultane-
ously another crisis of global dimension has unfolded in the Middle East.
Apart from the dramatic situation in Israel and in the Palestinian Territories,
we are particularly concerned by the situation in Iraq and in Syria. What
we are witnessing there is absolutely dramatic. Not only is fighting going on
there and military action, but people are literally being slaughtered and with the very specific objective of eradicating religious minorities such as Yazidis as well as Christians.

For us, this is a double challenge: at foreign policy level and, now that thousands of Europeans have already joined what is in their minds a “holy war”, it is naturally also a domestic policy challenge and consequently a security and integration policy challenge for the entire European Union.

At foreign policy level, we Austrians have from the very beginning made it clear that we want to provide humanitarian assistance. This financial assistance was made available through funding from the Foreign Disaster Relief Fund and we were – thank goodness – within a few days also able to assist the persecuted directly on the ground by providing medical goods.

Humanitarian assistance is an element of foreign policy action which we are able to launch quickly and to which we also want to make an even bigger contribution in the future. It is, however, clear – and we must not be naïve about this – that humanitarian assistance alone is by no means sufficient. Taking resolute action against IS terrorists is an absolute necessity. In this regard – and here we must also be realistic – there are other countries which indeed have other means at their disposal. Yet we cannot be insincere and support their action only vaguely or not at all. I believe, clear commitment on our part is required with respect to the fact that the American air strikes, for example, not only make sense but have also helped the persecuted minorities on the ground. And although arms shipments are always a dilemma – one always has to be very careful here – I am nevertheless convinced that in this conflict it is necessary that other European states which have the necessary means available also support all those who confront IS terrorists on the ground by providing arms.

At domestic policy level this means for us that we must by all means refrain from making one key mistake: namely to look askance at the 500,000 Muslims who meanwhile live here in Austria and put these people under general suspicion. We must be aware of the fact that the majority is not only well-integrated but makes a very relevant contribution to our society.

On the other hand, it is, however, a fact that there are some 130 individuals who have joined the terrorist fighters in Iraq and Syria. Each and every single one of them poses a risk to our security and each one of them is one too many. We will therefore step up preventive measures wherever it makes sense to do so. And wherever it is already too late, we require unambiguous and determined action against extremists on the part of the police. We therefore support the Ministry of the Interior and the Minister of the Interior very clearly in all relevant efforts which are currently being taken.

The third region I want to address is not a crisis region but an important foreign policy priority of Austria. A region that has for a long time and, in my view, quite rightly been a priority: the Western Balkans.
I know that for the majority of Austrians it might not always be popular to support the Western Balkans. Likewise, I am very well aware that it may be anything but popular to support offering an EU perspective to these states.

But while it might not be popular, it is definitely the right thing to do. The Western Balkans is a region we have close links with – at the economic, cultural and inter-personal levels. The largest group of migrants in Austria are individuals who have come from this region to Austria, our major economic investments are made in this region. So we have a strong interest in the implementation of necessary reforms in this region. Just as we have great interest in offering a genuine EU accession perspective to all Western Balkans countries.

Now that the most important personnel decisions have already been taken at European Union level, the new Commission can start to focus on the substance of its work. And in our contacts with the Commission we will most certainly continue to work towards ensuring that not only are the necessary reforms being implemented in the region but that the Western Balkans are also being offered a perspective in the EU.

In the context of our work at the Ministry for Europe, Integration and Foreign Affairs – and you will also see today that when the individual areas of work are presented – we always focus on representing Austrian values and Austrian interests. This is our objective as Foreign Ministry. Our motto is “Worldwide at Your Service” and our clear goal is to represent Austrian interests around the globe. Be it for Austrians living abroad or Austrian holidaymakers, artists, cultural professionals or scientists, entrepreneurs and business executives.

Our objective as Ministry is to provide services for them all. And I hope that today’s Ambassadors’ Conference provides you with the opportunity to gain an overview of the broad and multi-faceted range of services offered by the Foreign Ministry. I hope that you will also be able to see under what – sometimes difficult – conditions diplomats are active in crisis regions. And most of all, I hope that you will decide to make even greater use of the services provided by the Foreign Ministry. This is the goal we have set ourselves for today’s conference.

Thank you again very much for coming and I look forward to today’s event.
Mr. President,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen

It is with great respect that I stand on this podium for the first time as Austrian Foreign Minister.

Many eminent world leaders stood here before me and laid out their visions on international challenges and crises.

As you can tell – probably even from the last row – I look a bit younger than most of the other speakers before.

Indeed, I believe I am the only person under the age of 30 who has the privilege of speaking here this week.

So while I cannot speak from many years of experience, what I can offer is the perspective of a young generation.

My generation is the post Cold-War generation. The Iron Curtain collapsed 25 years ago when I was 3 years old.

For us in Europe, the years after the collapse of the Iron curtain were years filled with hope and new opportunities:

• We could travel freely, study in foreign countries and meet people from all over the world.

• We grew up in a society where human rights were respected, where the rule of law was a given and where religious freedom was practised.

• We communicate without borders on Facebook and Twitter, we have our entire lives stored on our smartphone and we consume the news online.

While the world after the Cold War offered fascinating new opportunities, it also proved to be not orderly at all, but quite messy and more uncertain than many had predicted.

Just two years after the wall came down, war returned to Europe in the Western Balkans. Thankfully, these horrors came to an end and these countries have a clear European perspective now.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

After the fall of the Iron curtain, we believed that the world would move forward and that more and more people would benefit from the same opportunities that my generation in Western Europe enjoyed.

But the world today seems to be shifting into reverse.
We are facing situations and horrors we thought we had overcome many years ago.

For young people like myself who only learned about the cold war through history books it seems unbelievable that the thinking in terms of confrontational blocs could return to Europe.

The crisis in Ukraine is probably the most serious challenge to peace and security Europe has had to face in decades.

Looking back it is easy to claim that this development should have been predictable, that we should have foreseen it.

But let’s be honest.

- Who would have predicted that after 3 years of negotiations President Yanukovych would refuse to sign the Association Agreement with the European Union?
- Who would have predicted that after this, the Maidan movement would be strong enough to force him to leave the country?
- And who would have predicted that Russia would react by annexing Crimea, actively supporting separatist movements?

We cannot accept that international law is broken and that recognized borders are challenged in Europe once again. At the same time, we need to find a political solution reaching beyond a mere ceasefire.

We need a solution offering a perspective for a free, stable and united Ukraine, a Ukraine, which enjoys strong economic ties with both the European Union and the Russian Federation.

Let us not return to Cold-war-thinking where two blocs face each other. Our political guideline must be to move from a policy of “either Europe or Russia” to a logic of “both, Europe and Russia”.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Some people have claimed that Ukraine would not be in this situation, had it not given up its nuclear weapons.

This kind of thinking is dangerous.

And we have to ask ourselves: Where would this lead us?

As long as nuclear weapons exist, the risk of their use – on purpose or by accident – remains real.

Let us be clear: nuclear weapons have the potential of ending life on this planet more than any other human action.

And let us not forget that 69 years after Hiroshima and Nagasaki the humanitarian consequences of a single nuclear explosion are terrifying and long-lasting.

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The desire to prevent the humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons should unite us all. We therefore hope that the next Conference on this subject – to be held in Vienna in December 2014 – will mark a real change of direction in international discussions on nuclear weapons.

Mr. President,

Looking beyond our region, we are currently witnessing a further rise of extremism in the name of religion with a new development: foreign terrorist fighters who come from Western countries and travel to the Middle East in order to join the fight.

There is no time to lose: we must actively address what is happening in Northern Iraq where the so-called Islamic State is attempting to wipe out entire religious communities.

Where children are being beheaded, mothers raped and fathers hung because of their beliefs.

In Europe, we estimate that there are thousands of foreign fighters with European passports. In our case, there are more than 140 people from Austria fighting in the name of a so called “holy war”.

We all know that these terrorist organizations operate worldwide. They get their terrorist fighters by global recruiting.

They finance themselves through global networks.

They buy arms and other resources on a global scale.

And they use – or rather abuse – the global communication networks to their benefit.

How is it possible that terrorist organizations have access to financial and economic resources that allow them to operate so effectively?

How is it possible that we allow terrorist organizations to abuse the right to freedom of expression by showing their barbaric acts on social media?

And how is it possible that they are able to recruit new fighters within our societies?

We all, governments and private sector, have the duty to develop preventive measures within our societies to stop the flow of foreign terrorist fighters, to cut off financial support to their organisations and to put an end to the abuse of social media networks by developing forms of voluntary self-restriction in these networks. The adoption of the Security Council resolution this week was an important first step. Now we have to implement it. And we must always remind ourselves that the battle lines in the confrontation are not limited to Iraq or Syria. These battle lines run through our very own Western societies.
Ladies and gentlemen,

My generation in Austria was privileged to be able to grow up in freedom from fear and freedom from want.

There are of course other stories to be told of young people, growing up for example in Afghanistan or the Central African Republic.

Today half of the world’s population is under 25 years of age.

Many of them lack nutrition, health care, education, and jobs – all in all not much perspective in life!

Therefore, the United Nations’ work on development is crucial, to lift millions of people out of poverty, to help the hungry and the sick and to educate new generations throughout the world.

The United Nations needs and deserves our support and I can assure you that Austria fully stands behind the post-2015 development agenda.

But we also need to ensure that respect for human rights and the rule of law will receive proper attention.

Only a society that respects the rights of its citizens will be a society that allows the potential of each individual to develop.

We are therefore very glad to organize the Second United Nations Conference on Landlocked Developing Countries in Vienna in November this year.

And we are honoured that Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon has agreed to attend the conference.

Mr. President,

I am aware that the list of challenges that the international community and the UN are facing is long. Iraq, Ukraine, Syria, Gaza, Central African Republic, Mali and the outbreak of the Ebola disease, just to name a few.

In view of these challenges the United Nations needs and deserves our full support.

And I want to specifically thank Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for his tireless efforts at the helm of the UN.

I can assure you that Austria remains committed to working actively together within the UN and its organisations to support your work and to address these global challenges be it as

• peacekeepers,
• president of the ECOSOC
• or as a member of the Human Rights Council.

We are particularly proud to host the United Nations Office in Vienna, which has become a landmark in Austria.

Austria has a long tradition of building bridges and serving as a place for international dialogue. We will continue to do so in the future and offer our
contribution to making our world a little bit safer and better for the generations to come.

Thank you.

18.7. **Federal Minister Sebastian Kurz, Speech at the “Summit against HATRED and INCITEMENT TO HATRED” Vienna, 14 October 2014**

Dear Colleagues, Fellow Members of Government, Representatives of the Religious Communities in Austria, Experts, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Thank you for participating in today’s meeting. It is indeed a great pleasure to see that so many of you were able to accept our invitation. The reason for convening this summit is the dramatic developments we have witnessed over the last few weeks and months. At international level we are confronted with the spread of the new, extremely brutal and ruthless terrorist organisation of the so-called Islamic State or IS in the Middle East. The terrorist acts committed by this organisation are particularly cruel both in nature and dimension. Minorities, persons of an allegedly different faith, women and children are mercilessly being killed by these terrorists. The majority of the victims are themselves Muslims.

Although these events seem to take place far away from here, they nevertheless have far-reaching effects on both Europe and Austria. A number of Europeans have joined this terrorist organisation, among them a considerable number of individuals from Austria.

It is therefore necessary to counter the serious war crimes and the savage acts of brutal barbarism, which defy belief and are being committed by IS terrorists in northern Iraq and in Syria. We need to fight them pro-actively at several levels and from a number of different angles. In light of these developments it is therefore an absolute must that measures be taken at international and national level, both in the field of preventive action and security as well as with regard to law enforcement.

In the international field, the issue of IS terrorism topped the agenda of this year’s United Nations General Assembly. In this context, the unanimous adoption of UN resolution 2170 directed against jihadists and/or ‘foreign fighters’ on 24 September is of particular relevance. Austria very clearly committed itself to the goal of fighting IS terrorism and joined the Anti-IS Coalition. We actively support the fight against IS not only by political means, but also provide very concrete humanitarian support to civilians. Alongside the one million euros for humanitarian assistance to northern Iraq that were
made available in August and medical relief packages worth 150,000 euros sent to northern Iraq in September, an additional sum of 500,000 euros from the Foreign Disaster Fund was appropriated to help refugees from Syria.

At EU level, we agreed on a comprehensive programme against foreign fighters in order to confront the problem of foreign fighters in terrorist militias in Syria and in Iraq.

Austria was able to contribute several important elements to this strategy. In particular, action against online propaganda will be stepped up. Greater efforts will be undertaken towards removing extremist content from the internet. On that particular issue I have held talks with Facebook and Twitter in the USA and will continue to do so in the coming weeks.

It is of utmost importance that very concrete steps are also taken at national level. What is generally well-functioning coexistence in Austria must not be jeopardized by these recent developments. With this in mind, prevention and awareness-raising activities must be intensified and it must be made clear that jihadism is not a game but a deadly serious problem.

I am therefore pleased that we were able to agree with the Ministry of the Interior and the Ministry of Justice on a joint approach on this issue. Our three ministries are thus taking joint coordinated efforts towards stemming radicalisation in Austria based on laws and common preventive work.

The Islamic Religious Community in Austria also holds responsibility for taking pro-active measures against radical tendencies. To this end, we have agreed on a number of measures with the Religious Community. One of the concrete results that you will also find in your conference documents is the joint “information folder on Islam” in which Austrian Muslims defend the fundamental values of Islam against any kind of radical hijacking. In this folder, the abuse of Islam by IS terrorists is denounced based on the respective religious sources.

This serves to underline that there is no contradiction between being both a proud Austrian and a Muslim. The folders will be freely available and distributed in over 200 mosques in Austria. We thus want to ensure the broad-based sharing of information, awareness-raising and clarification.

Another important project we are currently working on is promoting training and further education activities directed at Imams, those in positions of responsibility in mosques, officers for women’s affairs and other important multipliers in the Muslim community. In collaboration with the Islamic Religious Community we are also developing a comprehensive training and further education programme.

Today’s event, your active participation, the measures taken so far and the structures and legal foundations that are already in place form an essential basis for our fight against terrorism that is affecting our countries. However, further joint action and enhanced cooperation with other ministries, organisations and authorities is required.
Especially in the field of education policy and outreach work with young people a lot can and has indeed already been done in order to put a halt to radicalisation. Just think of religion teachers and Imams, for example. They are antennas that sense misguided developments in communities and can react in a timely manner, raising their community’s awareness of what is going wrong. The field of kindergartens and parent-organised daycare centres is another important area. Reports on glorification of terrorism and radicalisation as well as the propagation of such ideas in these childcare facilities have increased substantially. These developments are a challenge that must be addressed.

The challenges we are faced with are indeed huge and can only be resolved by joining forces and tackling them together. I therefore attach great importance to stressing that Muslims in Austria must not be placed under general suspicion.

In this spirit, I wish you an interesting and successful meeting, thank all the experts for their participation and look forward to incorporating the approaches for solutions that are being discussed and developed at today’s summit in our political work.

18.8. Federal Minister Sebastian Kurz, Speech at the opening of the Second United Nations Conference on Landlocked Developing Countries (LLDCs)
Vienna International Center, 3 November 2014

Secretary General,
Distinguished Heads of State, Government and Ministers,
Ladies and Gentlemen,
Thank you for electing me as President of the Conference. It is a great pleasure for me to welcome you all here in Vienna to the second United Nations Conference on Landlocked Developing Countries.

There is one thing I personally share with 50 % of the people living in landlocked developing countries: We are all under 30 years of age!

But while Austrians of my age can look at a bright future full of opportunities, most of the young people in landlocked developing countries don’t have the chance to follow their aspirations in life.

I hope that this conference can be a boost for landlocked developing countries and I am happy that we can host it in Vienna, because:

- Austria is a landlocked country itself.
- Half of our partner countries for development cooperation are landlocked. We therefore know their problems well.
• And finally: as host of one of the United Nations headquarters we are always glad to be able to welcome the UN-family here in Vienna.

Ladies and Gentlemen,
As a landlocked country we know about the impact this particular geographic situation has on trade and business development.
We have learned that especially for landlocked countries it is important to seek close and sustainable relations with their neighbours.
Therefore regional integration has been for us a cornerstone for our foreign and economic policy in the past decades.
And joining the European Union has provided us with enormous economic opportunities for the private sector and for our citizens.
But we wouldn’t have been able to profit from integration in trade, transit and infrastructure had it not been for the full participation of a strong private sector.
To use the words of the Secretary General: “business needs the space to do what it does best: create jobs and innovate”.
Therefore I am particularly looking forward to tomorrow’s Business and Investment Forum, where business leaders meet government officials from the LLDC group to discuss possible partnerships and strategies.

Ladies and Gentlemen,
10 years have passed since the adoption of the Almaty Programme of Action.
In some areas concrete progress has been achieved. But enormous challenges still lie ahead.
• In 2010, the trade volume of landlocked developing countries was just 61 % of the trade volume of coastal countries.
• But the transport costs of landlocked developing countries were 45 % higher than those of a seaborne economy.
It is therefore important that we not only restate our commitment to help the world’s 32 landlocked developing countries.
Our aim should be to adopt here in Vienna a new Programme of Action with clear priorities and a concrete timeframe which places the interests of the most vulnerable economies at the centre of international attention and action!

Ladies and gentlemen,
The preparation for this conference has been very intensive.
I would therefore like to take this opportunity to thank Under-Secretary-General Ascharia and his team for all their efforts.
I wish you and all of us a successful conference.
Thank you.
Excellencies,
Distinguished delegates,
Dear representatives from civil society

It is a great pleasure for me to welcome you all to the Vienna Conference on the Humanitarian Impact of Nuclear Weapons. The fact that nearly 160 States, many international organizations, civil society and researchers from all over the world are here, is very encouraging for us.

In the world after the Cold War in which I grew up, most people seemed to stop worrying about nuclear weapons. They were seen as a relic from the past, only an abstract danger which didn’t matter very much. But this is fundamentally wrong! The fact is: Over 16,000 nuclear warheads still exist – distributed among 14 countries and throughout the oceans – many of them on high alert and ready for use on short notice. And we have to be clear: As long as nuclear weapons exist, the risk of their use – on purpose or by accident – remains real.

Ladies and gentlemen, States that possess nuclear weapons consider them as important for their security – that nuclear weapons deter war precisely because of their destructive force. It is therefore no surprise that progress on nuclear disarmament has been so slow. But whatever value is given to nuclear weapons, it must be seen in the context of the risks that these weapons carry. Today we know more about these risks. Human error, technical flaws and cyber security among them. These risks can never be eliminated completely. Actually humankind has been very lucky on several occasions in the past. But can we continue to rely on luck for our safety?

Today we also know that the consequences of a single nuclear explosion would be even more terrifying and long-lasting than we thought. It would result in an immediate humanitarian emergency of enormous scale, an emergency that would not be constrained by national borders, but have regional and global effects. No national or international organization is capable of dealing with such terrible consequences. In such a scenario nobody would win, everybody would lose.

Ladies and gentlemen, these are enough reasons for urgent action on nuclear weapons – and why we should focus on their risks and their humanitarian consequences. Austria wants strong international rules on nuclear weapons: a strong NPT and the CTBT in force. But most of all we want to see a new momentum for concrete progress on global nuclear disarmament. In the follow-up of the conferences in Norway and in Mexico we hope that our discussions in Vienna will contribute to this aim.
Ladies and gentlemen, we all agree that the world would be a better one without nuclear weapons. This objective has been stated over and over again, in legally binding treaties, in the UN, in countless policy statements over the past decades. It is high time to move from words to real action! We need to challenge old thinking; we need to take in the knowledge of experts, the voices of civil society and we need much more global awareness. I look forward to our discussions and would wish that this conference can be a step leading to a world without nuclear weapons.

Thank you for your attention.

Final Document by the Austrian Chair

Humanitarian Pledge

In light of the important facts and findings that have been presented at the international conferences in Oslo, Nayarit and Vienna, and after careful consideration of the evidence, we, the States supporting and/or endorsing this pledge, have come to the following inescapable conclusions and make the subsequent pledge to take them forward with interested parties in available fora, including in the context of the NPT and its 2015 Review Conference:

Mindful of the unacceptable harm that victims of nuclear weapons explosions and nuclear testing have experienced and recognising that the rights and needs of victims have not yet been adequately addressed,

Understanding that the immediate, mid- and long-term consequences of a nuclear weapon explosion are significantly graver than it was understood in the past and will not be constrained by national borders but have regional or even global effects, potentially threatening the survival of humanity,

Recognizing the complexity of and interrelationship between these consequences on health, environment, infrastructure, food security, climate, development, social cohesion and the global economy that are systemic and potentially irreversible,

Aware that the risk of a nuclear weapon explosion is significantly greater than previously assumed and is indeed increasing with increased proliferation, the lowering of the technical threshold for nuclear weapon capability, the ongoing modernisation of nuclear weapon arsenals in nuclear weapon possessing states, and the role that is attributed to nuclear weapons in the nuclear doctrines of possessor states,

Cognisant of the fact that the risk of nuclear weapons use with their unacceptable consequences can only be avoided when all nuclear weapons have been eliminated,
Emphasizing that the consequences of a nuclear weapon explosion and the risks associated with nuclear weapons concern the security of all humanity and that all states share the responsibility to prevent any use of nuclear weapons,

Emphasizing that the scope of consequences of a nuclear weapon explosion and risks associated raise profound moral and ethical questions that go beyond debates about the legality of nuclear weapons,

Mindful that no national or international response capacity exists that would adequately respond to the human suffering and humanitarian harm that would result from a nuclear weapon explosion in a populated area, and that such capacity most likely will never exist,

Affirming that it is in the interest of the very survival of humanity that nuclear weapons are never used again, under any circumstances,

Reiterating the crucial role that international organisations, relevant UN entities, the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, elected representatives, academia and civil society play for advancing the shared objective of a nuclear weapon free world,

We regard it as our responsibility and consequently pledge to present the facts-based discussions, findings and compelling evidence of the Vienna Conference, which builds upon the previous conferences in Oslo and Nayarit, to all relevant fora, in particular the NPT Review Conference 2015 and in the UN framework, as they should be at the centre of all deliberations, obligations and commitments with regard to nuclear disarmament,

We pledge to follow the imperative of human security for all and to promote the protection of civilians against risks stemming from nuclear weapons,

We call on all states parties to the NPT to renew their commitment to the urgent and full implementation of existing obligations under Article VI, and to this end, to identify and pursue effective measures to fill the legal gap for the prohibition and elimination of nuclear weapons and we pledge to cooperate with all stakeholders to achieve this goal,

We call on all nuclear weapons possessor states to take concrete interim measures to reduce the risk of nuclear weapon detonations, including reducing the operational status of nuclear weapons and moving nuclear weapons away from deployment into storage, diminishing the role of nuclear weapons in military doctrines and rapid reductions of all types of nuclear weapons,

We pledge to cooperate with all relevant stakeholders, States, international organisations, the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movements, parliamentarians and civil society, in efforts to stigmatise, prohibit and eliminate nuclear weapons in light of their unacceptable humanitarian consequences and associated risks.
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