**Presentation at the Austrian Parliament Roundtable of PNND**

**Dr. Vidya Shankar Aiyar, 9 December 2014**

On 29 October 2014, Austria, Norway and Ireland voted AGAINST a resolution, L16 (<http://reachingcriticalwill.org/images/documents/Disarmament-fora/1com/1com14/resolutions/L16.pdf> ), introduced by India at the UN First Committee on the prohibition of use of nuclear weapons. The resolution pronounced ANY use to be a crime against humanity and a violation of the UN Charter, reaffirming various disarmament resolutions at the UN from 1961 to 1981 and called for a convention that would ultimately lead to the destruction of nuclear weapons. Yet, the explanation that Ireland and Austria jointly gave (<http://reachingcriticalwill.org/images/documents/Disarmament-fora/1com/1com14/eov/L16_Austria-Ireland.pdf> ) was that the resolution did not make any reference to the NPT, as a key legal instrument of ‘the international nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation regime’ and hence, was ‘not sufficient’.

It is well known that India is not a signatory of the NPT, and it first introduced this resolution in 1982. If the Resolution was merely ‘not sufficient’, Austria, Ireland and Norway, at the forefront of the series of Conferences on the Humanitarian Impact of Nuclear Weapons, could have ABSTAINED. Why did they go so far as to actually vote AGAINST a resolution calling explicitly for a prohibition of ANY use of nuclear weapons on ANY ground, even as an interim measure before the final step of a convention that would eliminate them altogether?

The contradiction in Austria’s posture at the UN becomes even more evident when one considers the voting pattern (<http://reachingcriticalwill.org/images/documents/Disarmament-fora/1com/1com14/votes/L16.pdf>) on Resolution L16 more generally. Mexico, the host of the second Conference on the Humanitarian Impact of Nuclear Weapons actually voted in FAVOUR! The Marshall Islands and Kazakhstan, whose governments are at the very forefront of global efforts for a nuclear weapons-free world, and whose victims are at every conference on the Humanitarian Impact of Nuclear Weapons, voted in FAVOUR too! Brazil, Egypt and China voted in FAVOUR too, while RUSSIA abstained. In all, 123 States voted in FAVOUR, 48 voted AGAINST and 7 ABSTAINED.

The key problem seems to be the call made by some States, such as Austria, Norway and Ireland, for the ‘universalisation of the NPT’. The world has to find a way to accommodate NPT outliers like India. Surely, it can’t be kept out of nuclear disarmament or made to sign the NPT as a non-nuclear weapon State. The call for a nuclear weapons-free world should not be constrained by ANY existing treaty. The NPT remains a non-proliferation treaty, despite Article VI. Even so, Article VI is a call not merely for NUCLEAR disarmament, but for general and complete disarmament – a fact very often forgotten in the debates over its implementation.

I would be grateful if MP Christine Mutonnen could urge the Austrian Parliament to look into ways to resolve this contradiction in Austria’s position. (A summary of these points was handed over to Ms Christine Mutonnen.)