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### **Vienna hosts second meeting of the International Commission on Weapons of Mass Destruction**

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The 15-member Weapons of Mass Destruction Commission, headed by Dr Hans Blix, concluded its second international meeting on June 30, after holding expert debates and wide-ranging consultations with the International Atomic Energy Agency and the Executive Secretariat of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty Organisation.

Hosted by the Government of Austria, the three-day meeting in Vienna was part of the Commission's two-year undertaking to assess current threats from weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery, with the aim of developing realistic proposals to enhance security and promote the greatest possible reduction of dangers from nuclear, chemical, biological and radiological weapons. The WMD Commission, which comprises eminent military, political, scientific and academic personalities from all regions of the world, will present its final report to the United Nations Secretary-General in early 2006.

Dr Blix opened the meeting on June 28 with a public address at the Vienna Diplomatic Academy. The former head of UNMOVIC outlined the history, context and dangers from weapons of mass destruction over the past 50 years, from the Cold War to the War on Iraq. Emphasising the importance of enforcing the regimes and strengthening technical barriers and inspections, Dr Blix said: "The first barrier to the acquisition and possession of nuclear weapons or, for that matter, other WMDs, consists in creating such political and security relations globally and regionally that the incentive to acquire the weapons is removed or, at least, weakened. No incentive – no weapons – no use."

The WMD Commission's discussions in Vienna ranged from proposals for increased international management of nuclear fuel facilities or supplies, to the importance of the test ban treaty, the relationship between nonproliferation and disarmament, strengths and weaknesses of different safeguards and verification regimes and inspections approaches, and lessons to be learned from a number of recent cases of proliferation concern, notably Iraq, Iran, Libya and North Korea.

Dr Blix thanked the Austrian government for its generous hospitality and support. He noted the importance of Vienna's international organisations, and expressed the Commission's appreciation to the IAEA and CTBTO for sharing information and insights gained from their experiences and expertise.

At the end of the meeting, Dr Blix said: “Nuclear issues, which we focused on at this meeting, are of extreme and acute importance. I feel we made good progress, not just in building our shared understanding, but also in exploring the need for incentives, disincentives and verification to meet the challenges of achieving nonproliferation and disarmament. The stakes are high. Reducing WMD dangers will take nothing less than worldwide engagement at every level of society, so we hope people will help by becoming involved and sharing ideas about what needs to be done.”

The next meeting of the WMD Commission will take place in Vancouver, Canada, November 9-11, 2004. Dr Blix’s speech of June 28 will shortly be available on the Commission’s website at [www.wmdcommission.org](http://www.wmdcommission.org). The newly-launched website will carry relevant speeches, research and discussion papers on WMD issues as part of its mission to raise awareness, inform and involve governments and concerned citizens around the world.