



General Edmund ENTACHER, MA

Chief of Defence Staff of the Austrian Armed Forces

Your Excellencies, Most Reverend Military Bishops, Mr. President Brigade General Reinhard Kloss, Mrs. Secretary General Nelleke Swinkels, Major General Sinn, Ladies and Gentlemen, dear Members and Friends of AMI,

In my function as Chief of Defence Staff of the Austrian Armed Forces I am very happy to give a warm welcome to all the delegates of this year's annual general assembly of the „Apostolat Militaire International" (AMI).

The primary objective of the Austrian Armed Forces is the military defence of Austria. This is conducted on the principles of a militia system. Her tasks include defending constitutional institutions, preserving law and order and providing humanitarian aid in case of natural catastrophes. Because of Austria's membership in the United Nations, the European Union and the Partnership for Peace (PfP) Program, foreign assignments have notably increased in importance.

Austria is contributing to joint international peace keeping effort. Since 1960, more than 75,000 Austrian troops and civilian helpers have been participating in more than 50 international peace support and humanitarian missions. Since the end of the Cold War the number of missions has been growing rapidly. In addition to classical peace-keeping or peace support operations there is now a growing number of humanitarian and disaster relief operations to be taken care of.

The role of Military Chaplaincy in our country and the role of the Austrian Association of Catholic Soldiers Austria is getting more and more important- especially in context with our missions abroad. A chaplain accompanies each deployment of soldiers. During the activation of a unit, he familiarises himself with all appointment holders and with all ranks. The new tasks in the service of security and peace make it necessary that we reflect on the basic ethical values and norms soldiers in democratic countries are committed to, not only on the basis of International Humanitarian Law but also on the basis of their own self-understanding. Because of this reason I am very delighted about the special theme of your conference "The Christian soldier: servant of security and freedom of the people" and about your lectures concerning intercultural competence in missions abroad.

I am very interested in the results of your general assembly and I am sure that the Austrian Armed Forces will also achieve a profit of your work.

I wish all of you a very successful conference, fruitful discussions and a pleasant stay in Austria.

All the best and God's blessings

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