

STATEMENT

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on the occasion of the

44TH GENERAL CONFERENCE

of the

International Atomic Energy Agency in Vienna

Mr. President,
Mr. Director General,
Your Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I.

Mr. President, let me first congratulate you most sincerely on being elected to your high office. I should like to assure you of the full support of the German delegation in the execution of your important task.

I fully endorse the declaration by the honorable delegate from France on behalf of the European Union. May I add a few comments which are of particular importance to my Government.

At the last General Conference, the German delegate reported on a fundamental change in the energy policy of the Federal Republic of Germany: the decision to phase out nuclear energy due to increasing resistance of the German public since the accidents of Three Miles Island and Chernobyl. As an alternative, the Federal Government prepares presently a sustainable energy policy with greater weight for renewable energy sources, energy conservation and the improved efficiency of non-nuclear power plants.

There is a general understanding, however, that the 30% of Germany's electricity currently produced by nuclear power plants cannot be substituted or economized immediately. This is reflected in the agreement by the Federal Government with the four major German utilities on a schedule for the phasing out of the 19 nuclear power plants, which are presently in operation. To each of these reactors a maximum amount of electricity is allotted that may be

generated till their final decommissioning. As basis for the calculation an overall lifetime of 32 calendar years was chosen beginning with the commercial operation and taking into account an average electricity production during the five best years of the last decade. The utilities may transfer generation rights from older to newer reactors, thereby allowing an earlier shutdown of less competitive units. This consensus on the remaining operating time for the nuclear reactors ensures that the utilities get an appropriate return for their investments, thereby avoiding compensation claims against the Federal Government.

Spent fuel management is another important element of this consensus: transports to reprocessing plants are possible until 1st of July, 2005 at the latest. After that date only the direct disposal of spent fuel will be permitted. The exploration of a final repository at Gorleben will be interrupted for at least three and at most ten years, to clarify conceptual and safety-related questions. The utilities will build intermediate storage facilities as quickly as possible at or near the reactor sites.

In addition, there is an understanding that during their remaining lifetimes the nuclear installations will be operated at the necessary high level of safety. If the agreed requirements are met, the Federal Government will provide for the undisturbed operation of the installations. The utilities have been assured that the government will not discriminate against nuclear energy, for instance in taxation. However the required insurance coverage for third party nuclear liability will be increased to five billion Deutsche Mark.

The phasing out of nuclear power production does not change the attitude of Germany towards the IAEA. The JABA will continue to play an important role for Germany. Its work is indispensable in the fields of safeguards, nuclear safety and technical cooperation.

In this context we especially welcome the efforts by the Director General to make the Organisation even more efficient in the fulfillment of its functions. There are clear signs that the role of the Agency in the future will be at least as important as it was the case in the last ones. Lately this was demonstrated by the prominent role attributed to the Agency in the final document of the NPT Review Conference.

In our opinion it is important that the priorities of the Organisation be kept under constant scrutiny; especially on the background of a tight budget policy with scarcely any prospects to be changed in the foreseeable future. Only by reducing or abandoning activities of lesser importance can the Agency find the personnel and financial means to take up new tasks.

III.

Mr. President,

I should like to make some additional remarks on the most important of these priorities, as we see them, namely

- nuclear verification and non-proliferation
- nuclear safety and radioactive waste
- nuclear science and nuclear technology, especially for developing countries.

Universal nuclear verification is in the opinion of my government the most important task of the Agency. This year's NPT Review Conference and the special role it attributed to the IABA has shown again that IAEA safeguards are crucial to maintaining public confidence in nuclear non-proliferation. The conclusion of Additional Protocols will further increase the confidence in this safeguards system, but to the fullest extent only if all member states take part in it. Germany has concluded the necessary parliamentary procedures for the ratification of the Additional Protocol and will put it into force as soon as all member states of the European Union are in a position to do so.

We welcome the efforts of the Agency with regard to the integration of the additional measures into the existing safeguards system in an efficient and cost-effective way. The new system with its provisions on additional information and complementary access offers a good chance to rationalize the existing procedures and to enhance the possibility to discover undeclared activities.

The verification of weapons excess material will be a new challenge for the IAEA for the coming years. We share the view that these methods should be applied on a continuing and irrevocable basis. As to the financing of these measures, in our mind a mandatory fund with a greater financial share for those nuclear weapon states who are at the origin of these fissile materials seems to be a fair and appropriate solution.

IV.

The proliferation of weapons of mass destruction remains a threat for international peace and security in the coming years. Universal adherence to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons is not yet achieved, and we urge the four states who have not done so to join the Treaty.

The positive outcome of the NPT Review Conference in May of this year surprised many observers who had some fears in this regard. However, this success should not lead us to reduce our efforts. The immediate beginning of effective “cut-off” negotiations by the Geneva Conference on Disarmament with the aim of an early conclusion of a treaty prohibiting the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons remains on the top of the agenda and should not be further blocked by linking the issue with other topics on the agenda. We regret that so far it was not possible to confirm the consensus reached in August 1998 to establish an ad-hoc working group of the Geneva Conference on Disarmament and to start negotiations. The verification of the cut-off treaty will be another important task for the IAEA, whose expertise in the safeguards field should be used for this purpose. We furthermore urge all countries that have not yet done so to ratify the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty without further delay.

V.

Turning to nuclear safety, I already mentioned that phasing out nuclear energy in Germany during the next 20 years will not affect the operation of the remaining nuclear installations at the highest practically achievable and necessary level of safety. The Federal Government has assured the operators that it will not take any initiative to change this safety standard or the underlying safety philosophy. Research in the fields of nuclear safety and waste management will continue to be promoted. Thus our ability — and indeed our determination — to cooperate internationally in these fields will not be reduced. The Agency will remain the most important forum for this cooperation.

The first review conference of the Nuclear Safety Convention has already contributed to improve nuclear safety worldwide. National reporting and the review process have increased transparency in the nuclear sector nationally and internationally. But as always, there is still room for improvement: it is important that the second review conference in 2002 distinguishes even more clearly between obligations of the Convention that have been fulfilled and those that still remain to be implemented.

Nuclear power today finds itself in a much more competitive environment. Ageing reactors may pose additional safety problems. I believe there is general agreement among us that these factors must not result in a lowering of worldwide safety levels. Further efforts are necessary to assure high safety standards and to increase safety margins as far as practically achievable. In this context, the Agency has a tremendously important role to play.

VI.

As part of the agreement of the Federal Government with the four utilities research in the area of nuclear technology remains guaranteed. Our interest in nuclear development work on new reactor types, however, has clearly diminished. This is also true for corresponding efforts going on within the

Agency. But we shall pursue our cooperation with regard to other technologies, especially for the interim and final storage of radioactive waste. Germany is presently reviewing its waste management concept. Some doubts exist whether the presently planned final storage projects fulfill the necessary requirements. We are trying to find a final storage location in a deep geological formation in accordance with the new criteria now under development. We would like to cooperate with the Agency and its member states to develop commonly accepted waste safety criteria on a reliable scientific basis.

VII.

Mr. President,

Under the auspices of the new energy policy of Germany, the Agency remains for us one of the most important international organisations. We are confident that it will continue to fulfill its mission for the benefit of mankind by

- guaranteeing the peaceful use of the fissile material under its control
- offering an important forum for the definition of worldwide safety standards and
- providing objective information on all aspects of nuclear technology.

Thank you for your attention.