

STATEMENT

**By Ambassador Christos Alexandris
before the 44th General Conference
of the International Atomic Energy Agency**

On behalf of the Delegation of Greece, I wish to convey to You, Mr. President, most sincere congratulations upon Your election to the Highest Office of the 44th General Conference of the IAEA and to assure You and the Bureau of our full support for the success of your endeavors. I also wish to extend my congratulations to the Director General and his staff, for their tireless efforts since the last General Conference to achieve the goals of our Organization with the highest possible degree of efficiency and cost — effectiveness. May I use, Mr. President, this opportunity to welcome on board all new staff members of this Agency, starting from the new Deputy Director General for Nuclear Science Prof. Werner Burkart, wishing them all every success in their tasks.

I would also wish to extend our warm welcome to the new members of the Agency Azerbaijan, Tajikistan and Central African Republic. We are confident of their will to contribute to the progress of our activities and tasks.

Mr. President, my Delegation is in full association with the statement made by the distinguished representative of France on behalf of the European Union and its associated Member States. I consider it, however, useful to make some additional remarks focusing on points which are of importance to my country.

Nuclear Safety

My country grants high priority to nuclear safety issues.

It is true that the individual States bear the ultimate responsibility for the safe operation of their nuclear facilities. However, the protagonist role in setting nuclear safety norms and standards and ensuring their world-wide application is assigned to this Agency. In this respect, we specifically highlight IAEA's long standing efforts in improving the safety of reactors in central and eastern Europe in co-operation with the

European Commission and the OECD/NEA.

In the same line of thought and with reference to the Agency's Budget and Program for the Year 2001, we expect that projects related to the safety of ageing nuclear power plants will be granted a special emphasis. Decommissioning nuclear facilities is bound to become a challenge in the years to come. A challenge exceeding by far the boundaries of the countries directly involved, to become one, looming large over regions and calling for timely responses. It is against this background, that we take appreciative note of the Director's General recent visit to Ukraine aiming at enhancing co-operation with this country and providing assistance to the decommissioning of Chernobyl power plants.

Mr. President, the collective memory of this Forum has registered the dire consequences of radiation exposures resulting from sources and radioactive materials lost or abandoned due to inadequate control.

We would welcome every effort made by the Agency to increase the safety of Radiation Sources including the adoption of legally binding measures enabling it to fully discharge its functions in conformity with the Article III. A6 of its Statute.

My country gives high priority to the Agency's program of Radioactive Waste Safety and to the tasks assigned to it under the Joint Convention on the Safety of Spent Fuel and on the Safety of Radioactive Waste Management.

I am happy to inform You, Mr. President, that on July 17th this year Greece submitted to the IAEA's Director General the letter of ratification of this Joint Convention.

In the same policy context, the GAEC has prepared a Presidential Decree on the Safety of Radioactive Wastes Management in Greece. This Presidential Decree is expected to be in force in the very near future.

Non proliferation of nuclear weapons and international safeguards

Mr. President, my country believes that a strong worldwide commitment to the full and effective implementation of the Non Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and to the regime of the non proliferation in all its aspects is a sine qua non element of the International Peace and Security.

The final Document of the last NPT Review Conference in May this year reaffirms this role of the Treaty. In spite of a number of isolated differences among the states party to NPT, there was a consensus achieved particularly on the function and the measures strengthening the IAEA safeguards. In particular, safeguards that increase confidence about the absence of undeclared nuclear activities and material.

However, the stakes that the NPT and any other instrument of the Non Proliferation Regime represent for the International Security and Stability, do not allow the Agency to rest on its achievements.

The NPT and the strengthened safeguards measures must achieve universality and completion of scope. They have to retain and even strengthen their credibility. They have to face up to the technology challenges.

All States having concluded safeguards agreements with the IAEA should proceed to additional protocols meeting this objective.

Greece has signed the additional Protocol to the Agreement between the 13 E.U. NNWS, the European Atomic Energy Community and the IAEA in implementation of the Article III, (1) and (4) of the NPT.

Completion of the scope of the NPT, as reflected in its Article VI, calls for the entry into force of the CTBT, for the early commencement and conclusion of negotiations on a fissile material cut-off Treaty, for the revitalisation of the START process and for the strengthening of every effort to achieve regional non-proliferation goals.

Greece has ratified CTBT and has committed to it a seismologic station in Crete Island

Mr. President, a world with NPT and a credible international safeguards system, no matter how intrusive it might be, is better than a world without it.

Physical Protection — Illicit Trafficking

In the last five years, the General Conference has adopted a number of resolutions on measures against illicit trafficking of nuclear materials and other radioactive sources. We regard, the Agency's activities related to this subject, as closely associated with its safeguards and verification objectives.

My country welcomes the Agency's Database Program, as it is in line with the Statutory functions of the IAEA, providing assistance to States in their efforts to manage nuclear material in a secure way, as well as to prevent and to respond to unlawful uses of it, should they occur.

Against this background, I would like to congratulate the Director General for the convening last year's expert meetings to consider whether there is a need to revise the Convention of the Physical Protection of Nuclear Material. We look forward to the outcome of these meetings and of the final meeting of the Group, May next year.

Setting up efficient and effective national physical protection systems, based on international norms and standards seems to be the best way to prevent illicit trafficking.

A revision of the Physical Protection Convention might widen the scope of its application, to comprise not only transboundary movements of nuclear material but also such material at storage, including for internal use.

Mr. President, in the effort of fighting the illicit trafficking of fissile materials and radiation sources, my Country has been active on several levels. GAEC performs inspection on all imported cargoes of scrap metals for detecting possible presence of radioactive substances or radiation sources. The customs as well as the industries processing scrap metals have been equipped with the proper instrumentation for

the detection of possible radioactive substances. This instrumentation is approved by the GAEC. The GAEC follows very closely all activities of IAEA concerning the fighting of illicit trafficking by participating in the relevant committees, seminars and workshops organized by the IAEA.

A great effort has been devoted in the early detection of possible increased radioactivity levels in the Greek environment by installing a telemetric network covering the whole country. This telemetric network consists of 25 stations equipped with state of art instruments and in four of them there is a continuous monitoring of water radioactivity measurements. Fifteen of these stations, covering the most sensitive part of country, are already in operation and the whole network will be in operation by the end of the year.

Technical Assistance

The Technical Co-operation and Assistance Program of the Agency is of paramount importance and constitutes one of the three main pillars of our Organization. It is worth recalling that the special Voluntary Contribution Fund which finances this Program, keeps practically increasing year after year, in contrast to the Agency's Regular Budget which follows a zero growth for a long period of time. My country contributes to both the regular budget and the Voluntary Fund for Technical Cooperation and hosts under its fellowship program, Agency's training courses, in Greek scientific and research institutions. With the assistance of the TC the GAEC operates in its premises a Secondary Standard Dosimetry Laboratory, filling up the existing gap in Greece. This laboratory has been considered by the IAEA a Model Project and has been included in the IAEA and WHO SSDL'S network.

Mr. President, the ultimate Guideline of my Country's activities, in compliance with its commitments to the Agency is what we regard as the golden principle of success of this Organization: the technological and scientific programs suggested or approved by the Agency should follow the specific needs of the requesting Member States widely tallying with their national development programs and upholding the cost-effectiveness principle".