

Statement of the Head of the Delegation of the
Republic of Hungary

Dr. József Rónaky

Director General of the Hungarian Atomic Energy Authority,

at the 44th General Conference of the IAEA

Mr. President,

I would like to extend our congratulations to you upon your election to preside over the forty fourth General Conference of the International Atomic Energy Agency. You may rest assured of our full co-operation in discharging your important responsibilities.

I am pleased to welcome Azerbaijan, the Central African Republic and Tajikistan as new members of the Agency.

The Hungarian delegation fully shares the position that has been expressed by the distinguished representative of France, Mr. Pascal Colombani, who spoke on behalf of the European Union as well as the associated countries, including the Republic of Hungary.

Mr. President, Distinguished Delegates,

Following the outstanding decision in 1995 on the indefinite extension of the Treaty on Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, the Review Conference of the States Parties to the NPT which took place this year has elaborated a programme of forward-looking measures to strengthen further the nuclear non-proliferation regime and its corner-stone, the NPT. The adoption by the Conference of a Final Document by consensus has also reconfirmed confidence in the IAEA and in its role in the implementation of the Treaty.

Hungary considers an important task of the international community to facilitate early implementation of the programme of action adopted by the sixth NPT Review Conference. We noted with satisfaction that following the Conference several States parties to the Treaty have expressed their willingness to conclude a comprehensive safeguards agreement with the IAEA. We also attach high priority to undertaking negotiations in the Conference on Disarmament on an effectively verifiable treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other explosive devices. The early conclusion of the “cut-off treaty” would be an important step in the further strengthening of the nuclear non-proliferation regime.

Hungary shares the view that it is an important task of the Agency to assist in verification of nuclear arms reduction. In this regard the completion and implementation of the Trilateral Initiative between the United States of America, the Russian Federation and IAEA on verification of fissile material removed from nuclear weapons has a forward looking significance.

Mr. President,

IAEA safeguards remains a fundamental element of the nuclear nonproliferation regime. Hungary attaches high priority to its efficient functioning and reliable operation. We not only commend the Agency’s activities in this regard. Hungary was among the first to negotiate and conclude her own Additional Protocol with the IAEA which was ratified by the Hungarian Parliament in last October and entered into force from April 2000. At the same time Hungary remains concerned about the low space of accomplishment of the comprehensive safeguards agreements and the integrated safeguards system.

Hungary commends the Agency’s efforts to implement the NPT safeguards agreement in force with Iraq and to fulfill its mandate under the relevant Security Council Resolutions. We also support the Agency’s work for the full implementation of the safeguards agreement with the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea. We continue to be concerned by the lack of progress in safeguards implementation in both states and urge these states to fully co-operate with the IAEA.

A national system to cope with the challenge of illicit trafficking of nuclear material and other radioactive substances is in place in Hungary. To test the system in practice an

exercise was organized on the site of a nuclear facility in Budapest in late 1999. Moreover, under a regional TC project, joint IAEA/WCO/Interpol training courses were held. The quality of the training courses benefited from the practical experience gained in the equipment testing conducted at the Austrian-Hungarian border.

Mr. President,

Anniversaries always offer the opportunity to reflect about the past but also remind us of things still to be done. The year 2000 among others marks the 10th anniversary of the establishment of the Hungarian Atomic Energy Authority. Though during the last 10 years considerable efforts have been made in Hungary to improve nuclear safety, to develop and maintain our nuclear legislation and regulatory system in accordance with international standards and to meet the challenges related to waste management and public acceptance these accomplishments serve to raise our expectations for tomorrow. To achieve this goal we invited an IRRT mission of the IAEA to review the effectiveness of our regulatory body and to exchange information and experience in the regulation of nuclear, waste and radiation safety. The review conducted this May identified a number of good practices which have been recorded for the benefit of other regulatory bodies and also made recommendations and suggestions indicating where improvements are necessary or desirable to further upgrade the activities of the regulatory body. To address all these recommendations and suggestions a detailed action plan has already been elaborated and approved. The summary of the report stated that “these recommendations and suggestions are made to an organisation which is seeking to improve its performance”. It is considered as a compliment; as a birthday gift to our ten-year anniversary.

Concerning the radiation safety, to complete the legal pyramid a new ministerial decree was issued this June. It follows the most recent recommendations of the ICRP and the International Basic Safety Standards of the IAEA.

Mr. President,

Having relatively few domestic resources Hungary must carefully weigh the options available for providing for the current and future energy needs of its people and industry. The energy supply security of the country cannot be maintained without nuclear power. This fact is not debated in the country. Therefore our first strategic goal is to make sure that our

licencees maintain a vigilant approach to nuclear safety. In my view the effectiveness of regulation is fundamentally determined by the extent to which it enhances the operator's commitment to safety. I am convinced that national efforts, our fruitful co-operation with the IAEA and the safety assistance programs have contributed to continuous changes in how plant operators view the importance of safety.

The reliable and safe operation of the Paks NPP has continued during the last year. The produced electricity in 1999 was the second highest in the history of the plant. The well-planned and organized maintenance activity certainly helped to achieve this good operational result. It is not difficult to find correlation between the high-quality maintenance and the effective utilization of the Maintenance Training Centre of the NPP established in the framework of an IAEA Model project. In the centre 500 people were trained in 30 courses last year. With a view to a more competitive energy market the plant is paying utmost attention to successful, profitable and safe operation. In this regard, we are very grateful to the Agency for organizing a regional workshop on "Impact of Privatization and Market Deregulation" at the Paks NPP where the participants agreed that safety and profitability are not conflicting objectives. Indeed, Mr. President, they go hand in hand. In fact last year at the Paks NPP there were no events jeopardizing the nuclear safety. The implementation of the safety upgrading program has reached an intensive phase and runs parallel with the periodic safety review of the plant. Based on the self-assessment carried out by the plant and the documentation of the Periodic Safety Review submitted to the authority the operation of unit 3 and 4 can be continued for another period of ten years provided that several improving measures imposed in the regulatory decision on the operator are implemented with strict schedule.

According to the new regulatory requirements a new version of the final safety analysis report with extended content is requested by the regulatory body and it has to be updated every year in the future. This new version has also been completed by the plant and now it is under the review of the authority. We are convinced, Mr. President, that all these reports, reviews and the IAEA OSART mission in 2001 will provide a comprehensive picture of the technical and operational safety of the plant. We welcome and note with satisfaction the pre-OSART mission to be held in Paks in November this year.

While further operation of the Paks NPP is widely accepted in Hungary waste disposal is still a challenging issue as in many other countries. In 1999 the Hungarian waste

management program reached a decisive point. The geological investigations showed that the Üveghuta area could be suitable for siting a LLW/ILW repository and site characterization could be started. Some experts, however, have called into question the completeness of the research work and its results, and any further activities were suspended. At Hungary's request, the IAEA organized an international peer review (a WATRP mission) to evaluate the selection process, the conclusions drawn from it and its legal and organizational framework. The expert group concluded, that the site selection process was performed in a systematic and careful manner based on a comprehensive and reasonable set of screening criteria, taking into account both the geological situation in Hungary and societal aspects. The expert group confirmed that the Üveghuta area is potentially suitable for a repository and made a number of recommendations in connection with the further activities. Now, as a result of the prompt action taken by the IAEA and the dedicated work of the expert team, the continuation of the site selection program in line with the recommendations of the WATRP mission has been approved.

Mr. President,

To increase public awareness in, and acceptance of nuclear issues many things can and should be done. In April this year, Hungary had the honour to host a Regional Public Information Seminar on the "Peaceful Uses of Nuclear Energy in Central and Eastern Europe" jointly organised by the IAEA and the HAEA. In our view its success was demonstrated by the great number of participants. We are convinced that such events are highly required and they can contribute to increased public trust regarding the use of nuclear energy. It was our sincere pleasure to welcome at this symposium high-level officials of the Agency and the representative of the OECD NEA.

There is a wealth of nuclear applications beyond nuclear power generation. The Department of Nuclear Sciences and Applications of the IAEA encompasses important and quite distinct topics. Hungary has attached high importance and value of the Agency's programmes in nuclear science and applications for enhancing the scientific and technological capacities of Member States. In our view it played a catalytic role and improved the public acceptance of all nuclear applications. In that connection we welcome the decision of the Director General to establish a Standing Advisory Group of Nuclear Applications. We expect that as a result of its work a better synergy will develop between the Agency CRP and TC programme.

Mr. President,

A review of the report on the activities of technical co-operation for 1999 brings to light the magnitude of the work undertaken by the Secretariat, which is worth of praise. In the European region the technical co-operation was greatly enhanced by the regular regional consultation meetings organised by the Agency. We expect that the next such meeting will contribute to improve the co-operation among the Regional Resource Centres. Not only do we support the new initiative of the Agency to enhance the co-operation among the existing regional resource centres but also decided to effectively contribute to that co-operation and to share our resources with other Member States. Furthermore it is my pleasure to announce that my government has decided to pledge its voluntary contribution to the Agency's Technical Assistance and Co-operation Funds for 2001 in an amount corresponding to our share of target. In that regard we welcome the consensus reached last week by the Board of Governors on a package comprising safeguards and targets for contribution to the Technical Assistance and Co-operation Fund. Hungary has always claimed that the technical co-operation activity of the Agency must be provided with financing on an assured and predictable basis. In that regard though it is a matter of concern that the consensus emerged at a very late stage, my Government appeals to all Member States to pledge and pay their contribution in full and in time to enable the Agency to meet the expectations of its Member States.

Concluding, Mr. President, I would like to express our gratitude to the Director General and his able staff for their work and efforts to run the Agency in a proficient and skilful manner. The IAEA has managed to withstand the repeated challenges and enjoy high prestige in promoting the peaceful use of nuclear energy, in ensuring safety and in strengthening the global non-proliferation regime. Let me assure you of Hungary's willingness to remain a reliable partner of the Agency in coping with new challenges.

I thank you, Mr. President