

**By Mr. Gideon Frank**  
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Let me join my distinguished fellow delegates in congratulating you on your election as President of the 44th session of the JABA General Conference. I am confident that your skilled leadership and moderation will guide the deliberations of this session and bring it to a successful and harmonious conclusion.

On behalf of my delegation, I would also like to commend the secretariat and the Director General for their usual excellent preparatory efforts for this session.

Let me also use this opportunity to congratulate Azerbaijan, Tajikistan and the Central African Republic that joined the Agency during the past year.

The Agenda of this General Conference is well balanced and includes many important issues relevant to the Agency's technical mission: nuclear applications in science and technology, nuclear safety, technical cooperation, the effectiveness of safeguards, illicit trafficking of nuclear materials, and grave questions of non-compliance, etc. I would like to comment briefly on some of these issues.

First, I would like to commend the Director General and the secretariat for their efforts in continuing the excellent tradition of the Scientific Forum, and the choice of its theme for this year: "Radioactive Waste Management: Turning Options into Solutions".

The general agreement between waste management experts is that high-level waste and spent fuel can be safely isolated in certain types of deep geologic repositories.

Moreover, in order not to foreclose future options, there are plans for disposition of waste in a retrievable manner, so that the waste can be reprocessed or repacked in the event of a future decision to do so.

Last year, an IAEA-sponsored international symposium reviewed experience worldwide and reconfirmed that technologies exist for the safe, environmentally sound and cost-effective management of radioactive wastes. From a technological point of view, the safe management of radioactive wastes and spent fuel is a reality.

The Agency can and should play an educational role in this respect by stimulating technical and scientific discussion and help build a factual objective basis for future national decisions.

Mr. President, Referring to Technical Cooperation: As conceived during Dr. M. ElBaradei's visit in our region in 1998, a Middle East regional project has been initiated under the auspices of the Technical Cooperation Program, for the promotion of cooperation in peaceful utilization of nuclear techniques. The project's objective is twofold: it is intended as a mechanism for enhancing the peace process in the region by building confidence through the promotion of scientific and technical cooperation between the countries in the region.

At the same time it is aimed at solving common problems in topics which are not necessarily confined to national borders and which have important regional impact in our area, like water resource management, environmental problems, human health, agriculture or geological phenomena. The enhancement of knowledge and common understanding of the problems in these areas is important for improving the standard of living in the area.

With these aims in mind, the participating countries have identified a number of common interests and problems for which mutual work and effort are important, and which are deemed to yield improvement of quality of life and progress in the region. We are indebted to the Department of Technical Cooperation, and especially the West-Asia Section, for their continuous assistance and support without which this program could not exist. We look forward to enhancing the technical cooperation in our immediate neighborhood: Jordan, Egypt and the Palestinian Authority, and stand ready to support such initiatives in a practical manner.

Mr. President, Illicit trafficking of nuclear and other radioactive materials still constitutes a major threat for international peace and security.

Israel welcomes the Agency's activities in confronting this challenging threat, by improving

international standards for physical protection, training and assistance and providing for exchange of information with Member States.

I would like to use this opportunity to inform the General Conference that the Israeli government is finalizing the process of ratifying the Convention on Physical Protection of Nuclear Material. It is Israel's belief that the universal implementation of this convention could assist in curbing the proliferation of nuclear weapons and materials, support the international struggle against illicit trafficking, and contribute to the overall safety of nuclear materials and facilities.

It is our hope that all our neighboring countries will soon join this important convention.

Mr. President, The international community faces a challenging technical mission following the Kyoto Protocol on agreed emissions target.

It has been estimated that the global CO<sub>2</sub> emission in 2015 would be 60% above 1990 levels, with two-thirds of the increase coming from developing countries using fossil fuel to meet expanding energy demand.

There is growing general awareness that only nuclear power can help maintain the Kyoto emissions target and prevent climatic change.

Rational assessments of the future by organizations such as the World Energy Council, the International Energy Agency of the OECD and, recently also by analysis submitted to the EC to define the European Energy strategy, show that nuclear generation, far from being "the problem" in environmental terms, is in fact a key element in the solution.

It is well understood that the environmental issues alone can not cause a resurgence of nuclear power use. Safety, economic competitiveness and public acceptance are the crucial issues that will have to be taken care of before any change occurs.

Mr. President, I would like to reemphasize an additional and no less crucial issue - the need to curb proliferation:

In our view, using nuclear power while refraining from nuclear fuel cycle infrastructure and activities including fuel production and reprocessing can limit proliferation risks appreciably.

Moreover, the IABA can promote R&D efforts for safer, more competitive and more proliferation-resistant nuclear power designs.

Exploring advanced technologies such as HTGR and thorium-based reactors with long-life cores, may constitute promising directions, especially if their safeguards effectiveness is also demonstrated [For the last 11 years, Israel has strongly supported the extensive role that the Agency plays in helping solve the grave problem of the shortage and poor quality of water in arid areas such as the Middle East, by using desalination integrated with nuclear power production.

The establishment of I7NDAG (the “International Nuclear Desalination Advising Group”) by the Agency, over 3 years ago, in which Israel actively participated has proven as a useful step.

Hence, Mr. President, it is Israel’s position, that INDAG work should be extended. It has been shown that nuclear desalination is justified only when combined with power generation. Although recent developments in desalination tend to favor reverse osmosis, energized by grid electricity, low cost electricity from nuclear power units may contribute to the desalination economics.

It is our view that the nuclear alternative even for demonstrative desalination plants, should be further thoroughly studied taking into account both: Economic aspects and Public acceptance].

Mr. President, Two draft resolutions stand out extraneous to the IAEA Statute and mission, and ought to be viewed in the proper context of the Middle East.

During the last year, the world has witnessed vigorous efforts by the government of Israel, in trying to achieve comprehensive peace in our region, efforts that have demanded courage, creativity and flexibility.

Israel believes that there is no way back from the peace process.

However, there is still a long and arduous road ahead. All parties must show determination, good will, patience and restraint in order to create and maintain the climate on which trust and progress can be built.

We still have to face the sobering fact that the commitment to peace and regional security is not shared by everybody. There are still states in the region that keep themselves disengaged from the peace process; still deny Israel's right to exist; refuse to forswear war as a means of settling disputes and attempt to impede the peace process by means of terror and violent activities, either directly or through proxies.

Mr. President, The tradition of the General Conference of trying to reach consensus resolutions is especially meaningful in dealing with complicated regional issues. In these cases action on divisive draft resolutions is counterproductive because it may create an illusion that it is possible to bypass dialogue among concerned parties, and moreover in the case of Israel, it certainly will harm its confidence in international organizations and norms.

In the interest of retaining the long-established practice of having the Middle East resolution agreed upon by consensus, I would like to invite the General Conference to consider Agenda Item No. 21 on the "Application of IABA Safeguards in the Middle East".

Israel has made no secret of its fundamental difficulties and reservations with the language and present relevance of the consensus resolution, and has formally distanced itself from its modalities. But Israel is firmly committed to the establishment of a NWFZ in the proper context and time, and is thus willing to join a consensus once again, if based on consent

The nuclear issues can not realistically be lifted out of a comprehensive and stable framework of peace, reconciliation and security in any region. The primacy of such an overall setting as well as the careful and patient confidence building process as necessary conditions to disarmament and non-proliferation have been substantiated by the vast experience accumulated with similar processes elsewhere.

The way to build regional security, we have learned, is to aim high but start modestly and move carefully ahead because confidence building is a long process. Nothing is gained by

harassing or ostracizing those that take their time learning that their core security interests would be uncompromised.

Taken out of this context, formal NPT commitments, even when coupled with IABA safeguards, do not provide by themselves adequate guarantees of compliance. Nowhere are both caveats more apparent than in the present day Middle East.

Mr. President, Agenda item No. 22 addressing the so called “Israeli Nuclear Capabilities and Threat” was first introduced by Iraq. Iraq’s credentials in matters of WMD threats are no longer a subject of controversy.

Many dangerous proliferation developments in our region and in other regions have occurred in recent years. None of these developments involve Israel. On the contrary:

Israel has neither threatened any of its neighbors, nor has it acted in defiance of international norms. But this is where the irony lies. Instead of taking note of the peace process and Israel’s conduct, there is an attempt to ostracize it.

Israel remains committed to establishing, in due course and in the proper context, the Middle East as a zone free of WMD and missiles.

Provocation and attempts for political harassment brutally contradict the cooperative mode essential for any consensus resolution on possible future developments in the Middle East. Acting on a draft resolution under agenda item No. 22 is bound to create a situation that will make it impossible for us to join any consensus resolution concerning the Application of Safeguards to the Middle East. Once the tradition of consensus resolution on the Middle East is broken, it is bound to be very difficult to revive it in the future. Agenda Item No.22 should be opposed by all Member States caring for that consensus.

Mr. President, Israel looks forward to working together with the D.G and the Secretariat on further regional cooperation in the peaceful applications of nuclear energy, and hopes that as in previous years, reason and moderation will prevail and that the current resolutions of the General Conference will strengthen the Agency in pursuing this goal.

Mr. President, I would like to end this address by expressing the hope that in the coming months the

peace process in the Middle East will move forward, and that in the near future true reconciliation, mutual security, regional cooperation and economic growth will overcome old fears, animosity and suspicions.

In this regard I call the IABA and the General Conference to back this process by committing itself genuinely to the primacy of the peace process.