

**Statement by Minister of State for Science and Technology,
Mr. Tadamori Oshima,
the Delegate of the Government of Japan
At the Forty-Fourth General Conference
of the International Atomic Energy Agency**

(Opening address)

Mr. President,

On behalf of the Government of Japan, I offer you my heartiest congratulations on your election as President of the 44th General Conference of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). I am convinced that your rich experience and able leadership will make this General Conference highly successful.

I extend a hearty welcome to the Republic of Tadzhikistan, the Azerbaijan Republic, and the Central African Republic that have newly become members of the JAEA. Japan greatly appreciates the role the JAEA has been playing in further fostering and strengthening international cooperation toward the peaceful use of nuclear energy; nuclear safety; and nuclear nonproliferation. In order for the JAEA to continue to universally fulfill its role with these new members, Japan hopes that the amendments to Article 6 of the JAEA Statute, which were approved by the General Conference last year with a view to enlarging the membership of the Board and optimizing the geographical distribution of its members, will become effective promptly

(Japan's Nuclear Energy Policy)

Mr. President,

A criticality accident occurred on September 30, last year during the General Conference, at a uranium-processing plant operated by JCO, Co., Ltd., in the village of Tokai in the Ibaraki Prefecture. On behalf of my government, I would like to express my sincere

gratitude for all the cooperation extended by the international community in coping with this accident. With two JCO plant workers dead, and residents near the plant ordered to evacuate their homes or advised to stay indoors, this was the worst nuclear accident since the peaceful use of nuclear energy started in Japan. We are taking it very seriously and severely. In order to learn from this lesson, the Japanese government has been doing its utmost to regain the public's trust in the nation's effort toward the development and utilization of nuclear energy by taking all possible measures to prevent the recurrence of such an accident, particularly through improving the risk management structure, taking a set of emergency preparedness measures against nuclear accidents, strengthening safety regulations on nuclear operators, and encouraging the Japanese nuclear industry to re-establish a safety culture.

Under these circumstances, the Japanese Government is in the process of drawing up the nation's Long-Term Program for Research, Development and Utilization of Nuclear Energy in the 21st century, and is aiming to finalize it by the end of this year. This new long-term program, building upon Japan's experience with the development of nuclear power in this century; sets forth the basic Japanese policy, defines the problems that we have to tackle, and depicts a long-term vision of how to best harness the diverse potentials of peaceful nuclear energy.

Japan intends to steadily continue promoting nuclear power generation and the establishment of a nuclear fuel cycle, while maintaining both the peaceful use of nuclear energy and nuclear safety as absolute prerequisites. In order to secure transparency in Japan's nuclear energy activity, we intend to fully explain the new Long-Term Program to the international community, including the IAEA. At the same time, we intend to continue making our use of plutonium transparent and accountable to the rest of the world.

(Strengthening the Nuclear Nonproliferation Regime and Safeguards)

Mr. President,

The Final Document of the recent NPT Review Conference succeeded in forging international consensus on many issues of nuclear disarmament and nonproliferation.

In particular, we highly appreciate that, regarding the relationship between the safeguards agreement and the Additional Protocol designed to enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of safeguards in order to verify the absence of undeclared nuclear material and activities, it was stated that, “once concluded, the two agreements had to be read and interpreted as one agreement.”

Secondly, we also consider important the affirmation by the parties that “credible assurance of the absence of undeclared nuclear material and activities in a State that has concluded the additional protocol could permit corresponding reduction in the level of traditional verification efforts with respect to declared nuclear material in that State.”

Thirdly, given the importance of the Additional Protocol, the State Parties have recommended that a plan of action towards its universalization be formulated.

The Government of Japan considers it extremely urgent that we intensify our effort in promoting the universalization of the Additional Protocol, in the belief that the reinforcement of the nuclear nonproliferation regime also contributes to the further promotion of the peaceful use of nuclear energy, which is another important mission of the IAEA.

From this point of view, we intend to take the initiative in drawing up a Plan of Action for the universalization the Additional Protocol, referred to in the Final Document of the NPT Review Conference. It is important that such Plan of Action includes the following points:

First, reaffirm the collective resolve by Member States to promptly conclude the Additional Protocol.

Second, strive to urge those countries which have not concluded the Additional Protocol to do so through bilateral and multilateral consultations, and through supporting the efforts by the Secretariat, in light of the goals set forth by the Secretariat in the Medium Term Strategy

Third, establish a proper forum for discussion for the purpose of creating an environment conducive to accelerating the conclusion of the Additional Protocol.

In order to support the promotion of the conclusion of the Additional Protocols, the Government of Japan intends to make extra-budgetary contributions to the Secretariat. We would also like to express our readiness to host a workshop for the Asia-Pacific region next year, together with the JABA, on the universalization of the Additional Protocol. At this workshop, we believe the States that have concluded the Additional Protocol will be able to provide their expertise and thereby help the countries that have not yet done so to understand the significance of concluding the Additional Protocol.

Japan intends to vigorously continue its effort to make the Additional Protocol universal, in cooperation with all Member States that share this goal, as well as with the JAEA Secretariat. I would like to request understanding and participation from all Member States to achieve this goal.

Mr. President,

From the perspective of regional security in Northeast Asia including Japan, and of establishing a global nuclear non-proliferation regime, we are following with great interest how North Korea responds to international concern for its suspected nuclear arms development. It is a consensus shared by the international community that the agreed framework, concluded between the United States and North Korea in October 1994, in no way relieves North Korea of its obligations assumed under the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty. I would like to point out anew that North Korea is urged to fulfill its obligations under the safeguards agreement it has concluded with the IAEA in accordance with the provisions of the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty

Under this premise, and with a view to finding a realistic solution to the problem of suspected North Korean nuclear arms development, we expect that the light water reactor project, being carried out by the Korean Energy Development Organization (KEDO), will

have an increasing role amid the ongoing move toward an easing of tensions in the Korean peninsula. It is from this perspective that Japan intends to continue its active support of the KEDO project.

(Asian Regional Cooperation)

Mr. President,

If Asia, which is making remarkable progress in economic growth, is to maintain sustained development, I believe the key to its success lies in the use of nuclear technology and nuclear energy; which imposes less burden on the environment. Japan, as an Asian nation with an advanced nuclear programme, can play an important role in the cooperation towards the peaceful use of nuclear energy in this region.

This is why I am very pleased to be able to announce that despite the continuously serious fiscal situation, we can resume our contribution this year to the Regional Cooperative Agreement for Research, Development and Training related to Nuclear Science and Technology (RCA), that we suspended last year.

I would also like to take this opportunity to announce that the Atomic Energy Commission of Japan will jointly sponsor, with Thailand, the first session of the Forum for Nuclear Cooperation in Asia (FNCA) in November this year.

(Administrative and Financial Issues)

Mr. President,

Recognizing the importance of the role the JABA has been playing, Japan has long been making both personnel and financial contributions to the Agency.

We greatly appreciate the efforts by Director General Mohamed ElBaradei and his staff to manage the IAEA efficiently and soundly for the achievement of its lofty goals, despite the limits of a budget totally dependent on contributions from its members.

We follow a basic policy of calling upon all international organizations to attain a zero nominal growth budget” so as to encourage efficient fiscal management. We believe that the IAEA should continue to meet the needs of the international community even under a zero nominal growth budget, by achieving further cost reductions in all operations, as well as by increasing the efficiency of safeguards. From this perspective, we highly appreciate that the integrated safeguards, which will contribute to increasing the efficiency of safeguards, were identified as priority tasks for the IAEA in the Final Document adopted at the NPT Review Conference, this spring. In order to enable the Agency to implement the integrated safeguards promptly, we would like to support the work to concretize the concepts of integrated safeguards and call on the Secretariat to make further efforts in this direction.

(Conclusion)

Mr. President,

The power of science and technology can be unleashed only to the extent of the wisdom of its users. I have reported to you frankly about the JCO accident. I believe that what we have learned from the history of nuclear energy during this century, and what we have further learned from this accident, is that this wisdom in using nuclear energy lies in keeping it for exclusively peaceful purposes, and of continuing to meet the challenge of securing its safety. The IAEA is a forum that can bring human wisdom together to make the new fire called nuclear energy that mankind acquired in the 20th century a torch that shines on the world in the next millennium. This is why I am convinced that it has a very heavy responsibility and its role should become increasingly important.

In closing, I expect that discussions at this General Conference will produce results that will enable us to advance one firm step further towards a brighter future for mankind.