

LATVIA, STATEMENT BY MR. ANDRIS EGLAJS, DEPUTY STATE
SECRETARY, MINISTRY OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION
AND REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Mr. President,

Let me start by congratulating you on your election to chair this 44th General Conference. We wish you and the Bureau all success to guide the work of our conference.

I also would like to stress that we fully associated ourselves with the statement of the European Union and we strongly support initiatives proposed in this statement.

May I also take the opportunity to welcome Tajikistan and Azerbaijan as the new members of the Agency.

It is a great pleasure for us to note that since last General Conference the Secretariat together with Director General Dr. Mohamed ElBaradei launched several activities to speed up implementation of several important resolutions from the 43rd General Conference. As example I would like to mention resolutions regarding combating of Illicit trafficking and strengthening of Nuclear, Radiation and Waste Safety. Our Government considers these aspects to be important for implementation of world-wide use of atomic energy and vital to prevent misuses of radiation sources.

Mr. President,

As time is limited, I will talk on topics, which Latvia considers to be the most important for us in this stage.

During this year, we have made preparations for significant changes in radiation safety infrastructure. The Parliament has already accepted in the 2^d reading the new version of the framework law on radiation and nuclear safety and it shall be in the force early next year at latest. The main aim of this new law is to improve national regulatory infrastructure and define more precisely all obligations for the users of atomic energy. I have to notice that Legal division of the Agency had been able to assist us when Parliament asked about the opinion of external experts regarding the draft law after the second reading. We know how complicated it is to make such review within very limited time, but the Agency did it very efficiently. For the implementation of new regulatory infrastructure we received promises of strong support from several neighbouring countries, especially Sweden and Denmark, which gives possibility to ensure that new regulatory body namely Radiation Safety Centre will be established and can work successfully from early beginnings.

Regarding new international treaties for Latvia, this year was also preparatory. Early this year we submitted a ratification document for the Joint Convention, now we are going to sign the Model Protocol, hopefully already in this month. Latvia have already made amendments to the national laws, which needed for the ratification of Convention on Physical Protection and Protocol amending Vienna civil liability convention.

Mr. President, Our cooperation with Nordic countries is as usual very successful. The joint investigations together with Sweden and Norway regarding combat of illicit trafficking were completed. Results were published in English, translated to the several other languages for the benefit of those countries, which would like to use findings for their own activities. We presented these findings to relevant authorities in Latvia and in Estonia. Next year Agency, together with several other organisations will organise International conference on security of materials, which will be hosted by Sweden. We hope that some our joint findings also will be discussed there.

Mr. President,

I come to the most important activity - decommissioning of the research reactor. The works are based on the strategy approved by the Government last year, which requested to reach "green field" stage within 8 years from now. Not always it is so easy to apply the internationally agreed approaches for such activities in the country like Latvia. We received a small nuclear facility without any plan, which should be prepared in advance, regarding the final stage of the facility. One important task, which has to be done in next few years, is handling of spent 1. highly enriched nuclear fuel. In past we used procedure - return to the supplier, but now this is still opened question either we have to build small dry storage or we will be able to send back the fuel for the last time to country of origin. Therefore Latvia strongly supports and welcomes initiatives of the Agency and United States to establish take-back programme by the Russian Federation. Hopefully the government of Russia will accept approach, similar to the USA program for taking care of strategic materials from former research establishments. Then not only Latvia, but also several other countries, which held such nuclear materials, will be able to fulfil their responsibilities safely and the risk to lost control over such materials will be minimised. We encourage any activity from international community and especially from Russia regarding acceptance of the reprocessing of spent fuel from other countries and the use of waste exchange procedures to give them possibility to accept equivalent amount of waste coming from those processes.

Mr. President, Finally I would like to say about our technical cooperation with the Agency for the improvements of radiation safety in Latvia. It is my pleasure to announce that Latvia promises its full share to the Technical Co-operation Fund for this year. I also would like to add about joint financing of the technical cooperation projects. We gain benefits from such approach in the sub-regional project for establishment of Secondary Standard Dosimetry Laboratory. Now together with Technical Co-operation department we are looking for the similar activities for the decommissioning project, the intention is to cover around 20% or more of the project expenses by Latvia. We know that such extra funds from the beneficiary countries can make project implementation more efficient and also increase awareness of the donors that plans for cooperation are self sustainable and real.

Thank you, Mr. President!