

STATEMENT BY THE HEAD OF THE DELEGATION
OF THE KINGDOM OF THE NETHERLANDS,
H.E. AMBASSADOR JAAP RAMAKER

Mr. President,

May I first of all congratulate you on your election as President of the 44th General Conference. My delegation pledges its full support to you. I would like to join others in welcoming Azerbaidzhan, Tadjikistan and the Central African Republic as members of the Agency.

Mr. Chairman,

The Netherlands fully endorses the statement made by France on behalf of the European Union and the Associated Countries. Hereafter, therefore, I will concentrate on some events and developments of particular relevance to the Netherlands.

Mr. President,

The most important development of the past year is no doubt the successful outcome of the NPT Review Conference. The fact that all Parties to this treaty were able to produce a consensus document covering all aspects of nuclear policy, be it on disarmament in general, on nuclear non-proliferation, safeguards or the peaceful uses of nuclear energy, cannot have but a strong positive effect on the work of the IAEA. As such the successful conclusion of the NPT Review Conference augurs well also for this General Conference.

Mr. President,

The Netherlands, along with all its European partners, already two years ago, signed the additional protocol to the Safeguards Agreement. We consider the instrument of the additional protocols a major step towards strengthening the global system of nuclear non-proliferation. The Netherlands, in the meantime, has also ratified the additional protocol. We welcome the fact that the number of states that have concluded additional protocols is steadily growing. A vigorous non-proliferation regime continues to be a major factor in establishing peace, security and stability. The Netherlands, therefore, shares the concern of the Director General of the IAEA that the number of states that have concluded additional protocols with the Agency, including states without full scope safeguards, falls far short of expectations. A reinforced and integrated system of safeguards is quintessential for the effective and credible functioning of the IAEA and a solid foundation for the existing non-proliferation regime.

Mr. President,

Verification of disposition of nuclear material by Nuclear Weapon States as a result of the dismantling of nuclear weapons is an area where the Netherlands hopes to see the Agency expand its activities. Recently, the United States of America and the Russian Federation have agreed to extract each at least 34 tons of weapon-grade plutonium from their military stocks and convert them to peaceful uses. The Netherlands warmly welcomes this development and considers it essential that the IAEA, as the custodian of non-proliferation, once the time is there, will be charged with its verification.

The verification costs will be well beyond the Agency's present capacity. Therefore, finding a solution how best to finance this new task of the Agency will be one of the keys to success. It goes without saying that the two States directly involved have a special responsibility in this

respect. However, extracting nuclear material from military use is in the interest of the entire world. Others should, therefore, be prepared to take their share in that endeavour.

Mr. President,

The Netherlands attaches great importance to non-proliferation and appreciates the role of the Agency in this area. Equally, the Netherlands wishes to commend the Agency for the pivotal role it is playing in the field of nuclear safety and technical cooperation. At the same time I have to add that for the IAEA to continue to perform its important tasks and to function effectively, there is a need for adequate funding of the Agency's activities. The Netherlands is concerned by the cash-flow problems the Agency is experiencing, caused by increasing backlogs in payment by member states of their dues. We therefore wish to call on all member states to meet their financial obligations towards the Agency in full, unconditionally and without delay. Since the Government of the Netherlands deems it of great importance that the safeguards system functions effectively, I am happy to announce that the Netherlands has decided to provide additional extra-budgetary funds to the safeguards programme this year. At the moment, specific items for funding are being identified.

Mr. President,

Allow me to make a few remarks with regard to the situation in the Netherlands in the nuclear field. The energy policy of the Netherlands focuses on energy conservation, renewable energy and liberalisation of the energy market. For instance, it is the national goal to let the share of renewables in total primary energy consumption, grow from 1% at present to 10% by the year 2020.

Nuclear energy is not a major energy source in the Netherlands. At the moment, after the closure of the Dodewaard nuclear power plant in 1997, there is only one nuclear power plant, the Borssele nuclear power plant, which will stay in operation until the end of 2003.

On the question of the applicable strategy for the decommissioning of the Dodewaard reactor an in-depth study was carried out by the Delft University of Technology in co-operation with the Dutch Economical Institute. Three strategies have been considered: rapid decommissioning within ten years, postponed decommissioning within 50 years and in situ decommissioning. Summarising the conclusions it appeared that essentially the financial aspects are decisive. Therefore, postponed decommissioning is the perfect solution, which consequently the government of the Netherlands recently decided in favour of.

Mr. President,

Apart from the energy sector, other parts of the nuclear fuel cycle are significantly and successfully represented in the economy of the Netherlands. First of all I should refer to uranium enrichment, as carried out by Urenco Nederland through the use of advanced gas ultra centrifuge technology. Urenco continues to grow. In March of this year the Minister of Economic Affairs opened a fifth separation plant at the Almelo site. In addition, Urenco Nederland uses its technology in spin-off activities in the aerospace markets as well as in the enrichment of stable isotopes, inter alia for the nuclear sector and for medical purposes.

Mr. President,

The Netherlands is also host to the High Flux Reactor which is situated near the town of Petten. This nuclear research reactor is owned by the European Commission but is operated by the Nuclear Research Group of the Netherlands, NRG. The reactor is one of the most powerful multi-

purpose materials testing reactors in the world. Medical activities are currently the most important pursuit of the High Flux Reactor in Petten. In recent years a centre of excellence has been created around this reactor. The interaction with the pharmaceutical industry, with several hospitals in Europe and with numerous international teams, has transformed the Petten site into Europe's "Medical Valley". The centre is the major producer in Europe of medical radioisotopes, several millions of patients inside and outside Europe are treated with these radiopharmaceuticals. Petten also provides for other therapeutical treatment like BNCT, the Boron Neutron Capture Therapy, which is currently applied on a trial basis, on brain cancer patients.

Mr. President,

In the intervention of the United States of America reference was made to Albert Einstein's combination of elation and caution concerning the energy of the atom. Let me end by also quoting professor Einstein, who once said "I never think of the future. It comes soon enough". With that in mind, we look forward to a continued successful conference.

Thank you, Mr. President