

Mr. President,

The delegation of Portugal would like to congratulate you for your election to this session of the General Conference of the IAEA. We are sure that under your able guidance we will achieve the best outcome for this Conference. We also would like to express our appreciation to all members of the Bureau as well as to the Secretariat. We avail ourselves of this opportunity to welcome Azerbaijan, Tajikistan and The Central African Republic as new members of the Agency.

The presidency of the European Union, on behalf of its member states and the associated countries, has already expressed the positions which are shared by my delegation. So, we shall limit ourselves to make some additional comments to the Agency's three pillars of activities.

Mr President,

This is the first Conference of the Millennium. It takes place in a context, which presents several challenges to Mankind. In

this regard, the last NPT Review Conference was an important event that stressed the efforts towards nuclear disarmament, the strengthening of the verification regime and the peaceful use of nuclear energy. The final document stated the importance of the activities of the AIEA relevant to the implementation of the non-proliferation treaty and the promotion of peaceful use of nuclear energy.

One of the aspects of the Agency's activities of a particular concern to Society at large is nuclear proliferation. We fully recognise that the agency is the sole competent authority responsible for verifying and assuring compliance of member states with the commitments under article III of the NPT.

Despite some unfavourable and unfair appreciations regarding past events, the implementation of the safeguards system is a fully recognized success which benefits us all.

However, to increase such benefits, the system has to be strengthened in order to fill the gaps that motivated criticism.

The key element of the safeguards agreement and the additional protocols is the provision of assurance not only of the non-diversion of declared nuclear material, but also the absence of undeclared nuclear material and activities. The adherence to the additional protocols is a clear recognition of a state's non-proliferation commitment. The road ahead is long and needs to be covered steadily so that the number of countries adhering to the additional protocols increases from the present low rate of nine per year. We appeal to the member states which have not done so to adhere to the additional protocols. In this respect, I am pleased to announce that my country is in the process of ratifying the additional protocol. We expect to conclude the said process until the end of this year.

Mr. President,

The safeguards activities constitute a responsibility of all member states. Its universal character should be recognised in all its different aspects. The negotiations that took place under the able leadership of the president of the board of governors, Ambassador Sérgio Queiróz Duarte from Brazil, made possible a recommendation by consensus of a draft resolution to be adopted by this conference. This fact will allow sharing the costs of such activities in a more equitable and reasonable way.

We welcome in particular the efforts for the establishment on a “Fissile material cut-off treaty” as agreed during the last NPT Review Conference. The prompt adherence to the treaty by member states will avoid the solving of disputes by means other than dialogue. Furthermore, we consider the increase of the amount of fissile material of military origin which is being placed under the Agency’s safeguards regime to be very important. We hope that, in years to come, all material with the same origin will be covered by safeguards.

Mr. President,

I would like now to turn to safety, a further pillar of the Agency's activities. In fact, this issue constitutes no doubt one of the activities with widest public concern. The manner in which nuclear technology is used for power and other applications is a requisite that, in years to come, will determine the evaluation of energy options. Due to past nuclear accidents, the world has been paying increasing attention to the need of co-operation in nuclear, radiation and waste safety.

We recognise the efforts of the Agency over the years to develop an effective worldwide safety regime and, in particular, the agency's consensus safety standards that provide essential guidance for national authorities. However, much more has to be done and improved by the international community. In this context, the research reactors, the illicit trafficking of nuclear and radioactive materials and the protection against radiation should also be kept under attention.

We take note and endorse the positions of certain countries such as Ukraine, which decided to shut down reactors with doubtful standards of safety. The legal framework which has been developed over the years by the Agency on Nuclear Safety has allowed for a structure which forms the basis to the practices to be followed by member states, notwithstanding the still remaining challenges.

Mr. President,

The third area of the agency's activities of particular success is Technical Cooperation. Portugal has been benefiting from this support which is here acknowledge with our gratitude. We know that there is a lot to accomplish in this area but we would like to point out the following:

- The larger part of the activities carried out by member states with the support of the Agency concern non-nuclear area.
- We note with regret that the gap between individual targets and contributions is still high and hope that the approval of

the draft resolution regarding the financing of Technical Cooperation meets the expectations of all member states.

Let me conclude by recalling that the quality of the work done by the Agency is the best assurance for the support of member states to the challenges laying ahead.

Thank you