

INTERNATIONAL ATOMIC ENERGY AGENCY

GENERAL CONFERENCE

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SEPTEMBER 2000

STATEMENT

SRI LANKA

Mr. President,

Allow me at the outset to congratulate you on behalf of my delegation on your well deserved election to the Presidency of the **44th Regular Session of the General Conference of the International Atomic Energy Agency**. We repose our full confidence in your leadership, wealth of knowledge and experience in steering the work of the conference to a successful conclusion. I wish also to extend my delegation's felicitation and support to the Vice-Presidents, the Chairman of the Committee of the Whole and the other members of the Bureau.

Mr. President, permit me also to convey our sincere appreciation to the Director-General for his enlightening statement and for the tasks carried out by his staff during the year under his skillful and dedicated stewardship.

My delegation wishes to welcome Azerbaijan, Tadjikistan, and Central African Republic as new Member States of the Agency.

Mr. President, Sri Lanka notes the notable achievements made by the Agency in promoting peaceful uses of nuclear technology for sustainable development and achieving nuclear non-proliferation through its safeguards programme.

Mr. President, in the global context, the international community faces obstacles and challenges with many unresolved issues posing threats to international peace and security. Terrorism, one of the most heinous crimes that can be committed against innocent civilians, has become an issue of critical concern. In this context, the adoption of the Convention for the Suppression of the Financing of Terrorism by the United Nations is most welcome. On its part, Sri Lanka has been at the forefront of global efforts against terrorism as Vice Chair of the UN Ad Hoc Committee on the Elimination of Terrorism. We have ratified the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of Children in Armed Conflict and International Convention for the Suppression of Terrorist Bombings.

The threat posed to humanity from nuclear weapons and the possible use or threat of use cannot be underestimated. We are pleased to note that the number of signatories to the NPT has increased to 187. Sri Lanka wishes that all countries will enter into the nuclear non-proliferation regime as early as possible. It is our hope that action will be taken to initiate immediately the proposed Fissile Material Cut-Off Treaty which is designed to ban the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices. We also welcome the efforts made by the Agency to strengthen the safeguards programme. Sri Lanka will take necessary steps to sign and ratify the Additional Protocols at the earliest possible date.

Sri Lanka demonstrated its recognition of the importance of the CTBT in ensuring a nuclear free world, by being one of the first countries to sign the treaty on 24th October 1996

and wishes its early entry into force. On a more practical level, Sri Lanka has entered into an agreement with the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty Organization for the setting up of a monitoring station under the International Monitoring System.

The existence of unsafeguarded nuclear facilities in the Middle East poses a security concern that cannot be disregarded. The international community has addressed this issue with the proposal adopted at the 53rd session of the United Nations General Assembly to establish a nuclear weapon free zone in the Middle East. It is in the interest of all the countries in the region to support the establishment of such a zone in the Middle East.

Sri Lanka like many other developing Member States has significantly benefited from the Technical Cooperation Programme of the Agency. The Technical Cooperation Programme has made it possible for Sri Lanka to acquire the capability of using nuclear technology for improving the health care facilities, and for improving agricultural and industrial productivity, resulting in considerable benefits for the people of our country. I wish to convey the appreciation of the Government of Sri Lanka to the Government of India for its support for the footnote “a” project on Local Production of RIA and IRMA Reagents and on Isotope Techniques to Evaluate Local Rock Phosphates.

Mr. President, non-power applications of nuclear technology is of great importance to most of Member States including Sri Lanka and my delegation is of the view that due consideration should be given to this in the preparation of the Budget of the Agency.

Sri Lanka welcomes the initiatives taken by the Agency to ensure greater socio-economic benefits and better end-user orientation of the Technical Co-operation Programme. The Model Project concept, Country Programme Frameworks and Integrated

Evaluation Framework will no doubt lead to realization of these goals. The Country Profile Framework for Sri Lanka has been finalized and the priority areas for future cooperation between the IAEA and the Government of Sri Lanka have been identified. Sri Lanka strongly endorses the views of the Group of 77 regarding further strengthening of Technical Cooperation activities of the Agency. We also commend the efforts of the Chairman of the Board of Governors in this regard.

My delegation wishes to convey its appreciation to the Agency for its efforts to make the national nuclear institutes self-reliant and sustainable. It is our view that the programmes of the nuclear institutes should be of national relevance and that the institutes should establish strong links with the potential users of nuclear technology to ensure self-reliance and sustainability. The Atomic Energy Authority of Sri Lanka, which is the national institute responsible for nuclear science and technology and the focal point of the International Atomic Energy Agency in Sri Lanka, has been able to increase its income from a mere 4000 Rs. in 1989 to Rs. 5.75 million in 1999, which is about 35% of its operational expenses, by initiating scientific programmes of national relevance. As a result of the very successful seminar on “Self-reliance and Sustainability of National Nuclear Institutes” held in Malaysia last month, it has been possible to identify policies, strategies and activities which will further improve the degree of self-reliance of the Atomic Energy Authority. My delegation wishes to convey its appreciation to the Government of Malaysia and to the Malaysian Institute for Nuclear Technology and Research for hosting this seminar.

The Government of Sri Lanka has recognized the importance of science and technology for national development, and has enhanced the financial and other resources allocated for development of this sector. A high priority has been given to infrastructure development and human resources development. The Ministry of Science and Technology has

prepared a six-year development programme based on national development policies. Funds allocated for the Atomic Energy Authority to develop its infrastructural facilities has been significantly enhanced and the scientific cadre has been doubled during the past five years. A new laboratory building constructed at a cost of Rs. 93 million (1.2 million US\$) will be ready in early 2001. The development of the infrastructural facilities and human resources will enable the AEA to make a bigger contribution to national development through the utilization of nuclear technology.

The Government of Sri Lanka, in spite of the financial constraints faced due to the security situation of the country, has agreed to double its Assessed Programme Cost payments to the Agency in order to settle the arrears in a shorter period.

My delegation wishes to express its appreciation to the Agency for its efforts to improve the Radiation and Waste Management Infrastructure in the Member States. Technical Assistance received by Sri Lanka under the Inter-regional Model Project on Improving Radiation and Waste Management Infrastructure has made it possible to significantly improve its Regulatory Programme. Sri Lanka has achieved the first and second milestones of this project. New Radiation Protection Regulations conforming to Basic Safety Standards on Radiation Protection, have been approved by the Parliament for adoption and are being implemented. All the radioactive sources in the country have been inventorised and procedures have been prepared for Notification, Authorization and Inspection of practices involving radiation and radioisotopes. Sri Lanka welcomes the initiative of the Agency to commence two new projects on Radiation safety to enable the Member States to achieve the third and fourth milestones of the original project.

Mr. President, Sri Lanka views the Regional Cooperative Agreement for the Asia and the Pacific of which Sri Lanka is a Member, as an instrument through which the participating countries have reaped considerable benefits through regional cooperation. RCA activities range from use of nuclear technologies in Medicine, Agriculture, Industry, Environment, Radiation Protection to Nuclear Power. My delegation welcomes the improvements that are being made to the Management Structure of the RCA; however, it is of the opinion that there should be close consultation between the Agency and the Member States in taking decisions on the implementation of RCA Programmes. Sri Lanka wishes to express its concern over the decision of the United Nations Development Programme to discontinue its support for the RCA/IAEA/UNDP Project on “Sustainable Industrial Development”, in spite of the very favourable mid-term review of the project and requests the Agency to take up this matter with the UNDP at the highest possible level.

Mr. President, on behalf of my delegation, I wish to reassure you and the whole house, of my Government’s active support for the programmes and activities of the Agency which have been very effective in promoting the application of Nuclear Science and Technology for development, without assistance of which developing countries such as Sri Lanka would have made very little progress.

Thank you, Mr. President.

Statement made by Mr. N. Pathmanathan,
Secretary Ministry of Science and Technology,
Sri Lanka at the 44th General Conference of the International Atomic Energy Agency