

**STATEMENT OF  
U.S. ENERGY SECRETARY BILL RICHARDSON  
FORTY FOURTH SESSION OF THE GENERAL CONFERENCE OF  
THE  
INTERNATIONAL ATOMIC ENERGY AGENCY  
VIENNA, AUSTRIA  
SEPTEMBER 18, 2000**

Thank you, President Othman. Congratulations on your election. Our entire Delegation looks forward to working with you, the distinguished representatives of the member states here today, as well as with Director General ElBaradei and the Secretariat.

Now, I have the honor of delivering a special message from President Bill Clinton, which I'll now read.

**MESSAGE FROM PRESIDENT CLINTON**

“On behalf of the American people, I extend greetings and best wishes for a successful General Conference. I am struck by the extraordinary developments and demands faced by this Agency in the seven years since I first addressed this gathering. But look how far we have come. New inspection capabilities were given to the IAEA after the crisis in Iraq and a potentially devastating confrontation with the Democratic Peoples’ Republic of Korea was avoided. With regret we witnessed new nuclear tests in 1998, but rejoiced in the successful review of the Non-Proliferation Treaty earlier this year.

These events make clear our collective and unwavering interest in curbing the awesome destructive power of nuclear technology and directing it to peaceful ends. This is a task in which -- with the IAEA’s help -- we must succeed to avoid the terrible devastation that would result if nuclear weapons were ever used again. If the IAEA did not exist, we would have to create it.

The IAEA needs strong and consistent support from all of its member states. Let’s devote our best talent and the full resources we can to allow the IAEA to continue its work. For a small investment, the IAEA returns incalculable contributions to peace and security.”

**EINSTEIN’S ADMONITION: “WATCHFULNESS”**

As President Clinton notes, much has changed over just eight years. Still – *Plus ca change, Plus c’est la meme chose*. It was more than sixty years ago that Albert Einstein alerted U.S. President Franklin D. Roosevelt to new research involving uranium that offered tantalizing prospects for human betterment, but that also called for “watchfulness.”

Of course, Professor Einstein’s caveat was right. Nuclear energy, with its promise to light the world and ease the miseries of poverty, also harbors the power to destroy. This Agency is a monument to such “watchfulness.” Today, with the IAEA’s assistance, nuclear power plants provide heat and electricity to

millions. Uses of atomic science in medicine, agriculture, and environmental protection are widespread. And the regime to beat back the spread of nuclear weaponry is as strong as ever.

Still, we remain watchful. We cannot allow today's realities to lull us from our attention to tomorrow's challenges.

Let me address these challenges in turn.

## **REDUCING NUCLEAR RISKS**

The 1990's witnessed unprecedented progress in reducing global nuclear risks. Ten years ago, the United States stockpiled thousands more nuclear weapons than today. Today, our total stockpile of nuclear weapons is roughly 60 percent lower than the Cold War peak, and still deeper cuts are envisioned under START II and III.

Ten years ago, nuclear weapons tests were a regular fact of international life. This is no more. The United States stands firmly behind the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty and will continue to work for its ratification worldwide.

Ten years ago, the United States was producing fissile material for nuclear weapons. This, too, is no more. It is far past time to end the stalemate in the Conference on Disarmament and get on with the important work of completing a Fissile Material Cutoff Treaty.

And it is not enough to end new production of fissile material for weapons. We must also improve controls on existing materials. Universal acceptance of the Strengthened Safeguards Protocol remains a top priority. We also need to continue locking-down nuclear materials that pose special risks – like those in the Democratic Peoples' Republic of Korea, where U.S. Department of Energy and North Korean specialists have readied many tons of plutonium-bearing spent fuel for international safeguards. And finally, we need to monitor materials freed by recent cuts in nuclear arms, protecting against a return to the era of the arms race.

Today, I can report that we are near to completing the Verification Agreement for the Trilateral Initiative. This Agreement will enable the IAEA to verify that hundreds of tons of fissile materials removed from U.S. and Russian military stockpiles never again return to nuclear weapons. Our goal is to submit an Agreement to the IAEA Board of Governors when it meets in December.

And there is more good news. Three weeks ago, U.S. Vice President Gore and Russia's Prime Minister Kasyanov signed the Plutonium Management and Disposition Agreement. This Agreement will result in the destruction of 68 metric tons of U.S. and Russian weapons-grade plutonium -- 34 metric tons each -- enough for thousands of nuclear weapons. We fully expect the IAEA to play a role in monitoring this Agreement.

Ten years ago, the U.S. and Soviet partnership to reduce nuclear dangers was narrowly focused on formal treaties. Today, it is broadly based and highly effective. Just consider our progress. In cooperation with Russia and the Newly Independent States, we have improved the physical security for more than 450 metric tons of plutonium and highly enriched uranium, keeping it out of the hands of terrorists or countries of proliferation concern. We have provided civilian employment for more than 8,000 former Soviet weapons scientists and engineers. We have secured 300 metric tons of spent fuel at the BN-350 breeder reactor in Kazakhstan -- three years ahead of schedule. And we have accelerated purchases of Russian weapons uranium, converting more than 80 metric tons of this material, roughly 30 metric tons more than anticipated in the schedule of the U.S.-Russia HEU Purchase Agreement.

And our work goes on. In Russia two and a half weeks ago, I was proud to participate in the inauguration of the new Sarov Technopark -- established under the Nuclear Cities Initiative that Russian Minister Adamov and I launched in these halls two years ago. The Technopark will partner former nuclear weapons workers with private industry, speeding the conversion of facilities in Russia's nuclear weapons complex to peaceful production.

While in Russia, I also went to the Far East, where I signed an agreement with Admiral Kuroyedov, Commander-in-Chief of Russia's Navy, expanding our cooperative work to better protect Russian naval nuclear fuel from theft or diversion. Our nuclear material security cooperation with the Russia Navy has been outstanding in both the Far East and with Russia's Northern Fleet, which I visited at this time last year. The Russian Navy has presented me with other submarine assistance proposals, which are being examined now by the U.S. government. We look forward to future cooperation with the Russian Navy.

## **PROMOTING THE SAFE USES OF NUCLEAR ENERGY**

Distinguished representatives, we must also devote our energies to pursuing a framework for the peaceful use of nuclear energy.

In the United States, we are revitalizing research and development, to assure the cost competitiveness and viability of nuclear energy through the next century.

Nuclear energy needs to be part of the global, clean energy mix. But let's be candid. Communities and consumers worldwide must have confidence that nuclear power reactors can be operated safely and cheaply, and with due regard for nonproliferation and long-term disposal of spent fuel and waste.

As Secretary of Energy, I have advanced the Nuclear Energy Research Initiative and Generation IV Nuclear Power Systems Initiative to develop new reactor designs that customers will find economical, safe, proliferation-resistant, and that minimize production of nuclear waste. This is not a job for any one country alone - and today, I signed an agreement with the government of France to advance reactor technologies. The IAEA can also play a supporting role in this area.

We applaud the IAEA for helping more nations and more people to share in the safe and peaceful uses of nuclear energy. We believe this role should be strengthened. The United States will pay its full share to the IAEA's Technical Cooperation Fund -- more than \$18 million this year. I urge all other member

states to follow our lead, which could raise another \$15 million annually for technical cooperation projects.

But again: we must be watchful -- for preparing for nuclear energy's future requires that we also manage the consequences of the nuclear past. We cannot forget the important work of ensuring the safe operation of nuclear power reactors -- and I applaud the decisions of Ukraine, Lithuania, Bulgaria, and Kazakhstan to shut down unsafe reactors.

The United States will continue to support the IAEA's nuclear safety program and the safety norms this Agency has done so much to encourage. This year, my government was proud to host an Operational Safety Review Team mission to the North Anna nuclear power plant, the fourth such visit to a U.S. plant since 1982.

Safe decommissioning of older reactors is another priority. The United States is working to assist Kazakhstan in decommissioning its BN-350 reactor. In Ukraine, we are also paving the way to allow early decommissioning of the reactors at Chernobyl.

And finally, we must provide for the safe and secure management and disposal of spent nuclear fuel, wastes, and separated stocks of civil plutonium. Last year in Denver, Colorado I was pleased to host an international conference on geologic repositories. We agreed that geologic disposal is a preferred option worldwide, independent of choices that nations make with respect to the nuclear fuel cycle. So to accelerate our cooperation, I pledge to make our research, technology, and procedures for geologic disposal open and available to all IAEA member states.

## **CONCLUSION**

Ladies and gentlemen: looking to the future, let us agree to stand for this Agency, which embodies Professor Einstein's plea for "watchfulness" so well.

Half a world away right now, our nations' best are jointly taking the field under the Olympic ideal of "encouraging a peaceful society." I believe I speak for all of us when I say that we are joined here, too, in pursuit of such an ideal. For some in Sydney and some of you here today, there will be medals for your work. Still, our ultimate goal -- a better, safer world -- is less tangible. But if we reach it, everybody wins.